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MIRANDA;

A MIDSUMMER MADNESS.

BY

MORTIMER COLLINS.

VOL. I.

" Why, this is very midsummer madness.
* * * * *
Though this be madness, yet there 's method in 't."
—SHAKESPEARE.

LONDON: HENRY S. KING & CO.
65 CORNHILL AND 12 PATERNOSTER ROW
1873.

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TO

HENRY CAMPKIN,

POET AND ARCHÆOLOGIST.

"Mihi nemo est amicior."

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MIRANDA;

A MIDSUMMER MADNESS.

CHAPTER I.

HER GRANDFATHER AND GRANDMOTHER.

"Most learned scion of unlearned race,
Revered far more than parson or than squire;
He lived a century in his native place,
A strange old village in a strange old shire."

WHOSO makes pilgrimage to the quaint village of Rothescamp-in-the-Valley, will find much to reward him. There is the church—an abbey church originally—with a massive square tower, inhabited by jackdaws innumerable, and the most daring of flying buttresses, and one of the finest peals of bells in the kingdom. The story is, that when those bells were being cast, Guy de Rothescamp, just returned from the Crusades, threw into the

molten mass all his gold and silver plate. As evidence hereof is engraven on the tenor bell—

E Solyma laurum + nunc Xristo aurum.

Then there is the beautiful rivulet Rothe, always full and free and clear, always containing trout innumerable. Then there is the famous old inn and posting-house, the Tachbrook Arms;—for the Rothescamps have long perished from the land, and their estates and lordships have passed to the Tachbrooks, whose house, at Rothescamp-on-the-Hill, is a famous show-place. Rothescamp-on-the-Hill is five miles away, up over the downs, by a white chalky road, which bears the inappropriate name of Long River. The great house stands almost alone, only a few cottages clustering around its lofty outer walls; and it is a long time now since any Tachbrook has dwelt there. The last baronet was killed in a duel; the present baronet is commonly reported to be in a lunatic asylum. The old house is kept in order by a few staid old servants. The estate is sagaciously administered by a trusty old steward; but no Tachbrook,

save one, has been seen in either Rothescamp for many a year.

Save one. Walk up the village street, and you will see a long red brick house, two stories high, with a row of pollarded limes in front of it. If the hall-door is open you may admire the old stairway of black oak, and the pleasant garden, which may be seen through an arched doorway. Look at the brass-plate on that entrance-door, and you will see engraven—"Septimus Tachbrook, M.D." Enter a quaint study on the left, and you will see Doctor Septimus Tachbrook—a spare man, six feet four inches high, with stooping shoulders, an eagle's beak, and eyes so keen that you at once conclude he wears those gold-rimmed spectacles to moderate their power.

Doctor Tachbrook is the youngest son of the brother of the last baronet. He is seventh son of a seventh son—a doctor heaven-born. He made himself what he is. His father, considering himself hardly used, because he was the youngest son when he ought to have been the eldest, consoled himself with wine and the dice, and died an outlaw. Septimus Tachbrook's eldest brothers

took very much after their father: they were obliged to work for their living; they did the genteelest work they could find. One married a rich widow; another started a bank on a new principle; a third got an appointment under Government, and so on. Not so Septimus. An old maiden lady, his mother's cousin, seeing that he meant to work, helped him to obtain a medical education. Medicine was his natural faculty. A thorough disciple of Asklepios, he loved the healing art. He practised with success in London for some time; but when the old lady died, she left him her little property, a few hundreds a year, and he, drawn towards his native air, bought the old house in Rothescamp village, and settled down for life. Soon he had a capital practice, for all the county families for miles round were delighted to have as doctor a real Tachbrook. He ruined two or three rivals, who had previously been trying to ruin each other. He had more than he could do; his curricle and pair seemed ubiquitous. Nobody of any standing, for miles around Rothescamp, could be born or die without Doctor Tachbrook's aid.

When the Doctor was nearly forty, an adventure befell him. Among his clients was a widow lady of about his own age—Lady Endsleigh—who had several daughters, and who kept a governess to look after them. This governess was a Polish girl, with the wondrous name of Sobieska Chlopicki; amazingly accomplished, mistress of many languages, a musician most perfect and original. Her hair was long, and black as midnight; her face pallid, but looking as if a fire burnt beneath the skin; her tall form strangely pliant and willowy; her hands tremulous, nervous, looking like living creatures on the strings of a harp, or the keys of a piano. Lady Endsleigh and her daughters were subjugated by her. She became their mistress. They worshipped and obeyed her. All the country round used to remark how infatuated Lady Endsleigh was with that foreign governess of hers.

One night, about twelve, as the Doctor was just going to bed, there came a tremendous ring at the night-bell. Opening the door, Doctor Tachbrook saw a carriage with four steaming horses, the lamps throwing vivid

light upon the dark village street. The man who had rung delivered a note from Lady Endsleigh. It was brief and incoherent; it simply stated that Miss Chlopicki was suddenly taken very ill—seemed to be in a sort of trance—would he come at once?

"Confound the girl!" said to himself Septimus Tachbrook, who was rather sleepy. "Never mind; it's a good eight miles to the Lodge; I shall get half-an-hour's doze in the carriage."

So he put together such things as he deemed necessary, got into the carriage, and slept till the postilions pulled up at Lady Endsleigh's gate.

Her Ladyship was a cheerful fussy personage, who took her meals regularly, and delighted in gossip. She was a kind of grown-up child, and as she had married young, her elder daughters treated her very much as if she were merely their sister. The establishment was in a chaotic state until Miss Chlopicki came as governess; before that time no governess had been known to stay above three months. This Polish girl was a born administratrix. At once she saw

the situation. She took Mary Endsleigh, the eldest daughter, a girl of twenty-three, in hand, and told her that her conduct to her mother was improper. Miss Endsleigh laughed at her superciliously: she was no match for the Pole.

"You may sneer," she said; "you think yourself better than I; but my father was a prince, and I am a princess in my own right. I am poor, you think—I am; but I am not so poor in spirit as to treat my own mother with disrespect. Take my advice, Miss Endsleigh, behave to Lady Endsleigh like a daughter; then, as a reward, I will teach you to play the piano like an artist, instead of thumping it as if all your fingers were hammers."

It took a little time to carry out the reform, but Sobieska did it. She advised her Ladyship on all points. She induced her to act as mistress in the house; whereas, previously, orders had been given by all the elder daughters, and when Lady Endsleigh wanted to drive, she would perhaps find all the carriages engaged. Lady Endsleigh was fond of giving dinner-parties, and the three

elder daughters (there were six in all, the youngest fourteen) always joined them. Miss Chlopicki also joined them, and by her quaint beauty, her brilliant talk, and her occasional sly sarcasms, completely effaced these girls. They were beaten at last. They capitulated —and took to adoring Sobieska instead of hating her.

The one who held out longest was the third—Violet—about nineteen. She was a romp and a hoyden—liked to climb trees after birds' nests, and to wade rivers after water-lilies. She had just emerged from the schoolroom, having learned nothing; for all previous governesses had been afraid of her, as well they might. One that offended her she tied to a tree in the park, and left her there. She fancied her elder sisters fools for being managed by Sobieska. She rejoiced in her physical strength, and longed to show Miss Chlopicki her superiority therein. One afternoon she entered the schoolroom (a very comfortable room, for Lady Endsleigh liked to make every one comfortable), just as her three younger sisters left it. Sobieska had thrown herself on a sofa to rest. Her eyes

were closed. Violet came forward, took her wrists in her hands, grasping them tightly, and said—

"Now, Miss Chlopicki, you are in my power."

Sobieska looked at her languidly, and smiled.

"Dear me," she said, "what are you going to do to me?"

"You see I am stronger than you," said Violet.

"I see you are more foolish," said Sobieska. "Do you really think you can hold my hands? You are a mere baby."

Violet, indignant, squeezed her wrists.

"O yes! you hurt me dreadfully. Now, hold fast; I am going to take my hands away."

Sobieska, whose father had taught her to fence, gave a sudden turn of the wrist, and was free. So sharp was that turn that Violet almost fainted with pain, and there was a dark line across the palm of her left hand, caused by the rapid movement of Sobieska's right.

From that time Violet was as docile as her

sisters. Another circumstance rendered them more docile still. One winter evening Lady Endsleigh had a dinner-party, and the conversation turned on a man who had been lecturing on mesmerism in the county town. Difference of opinion existed as to whether he did anything inexplicable. Miss Chlopicki said nothing.

When the guests had left, the ladies sat awhile around the smouldering fire, and referred back to the conversation.

"You did not give any opinion, I remarked," said Lady Endsleigh to her governess.

"No," said Sobieska; "my opinions are so decided that your guests might have been shocked."

"O, do tell us what they are," said her Ladyship and Mary and Annabel and Violet, all in a breath.

"The man they heard lecture is an impostor," said Sobieska. "So was Frederic Antony Mesmer, the inventor of mesmerism. But there is such a thing as spiritual magnetism, and it is a force of immense value. I know it, too, for I can magnetise."

"O, do magnetise me!" cried the impetuous Violet.

"It is not a thing to be done for mere amusement. Come to me the next time you feel inclined to be mischievous, and I may try the experiment."

The time came, and Violet was successfully magnetised. So in their turn were her sisters. Now, whatever be the true theory of spiritual magnetism—whether it is a matter of imagination, or of will, or a physical change—assuredly it gives the person who has the power immense ascendancy over those who submit to it. These girls, who had previously rebelled against all authority, became Sobieska's humble servants. She used her despotism wisely. Never hitherto had they learned anything, having always treated their teachers with scorn. Sobieska brought them back to the schoolroom, and did her best to amend their neglected education. The consequence of this was that she became lady paramount of Endsleigh Lodge, and that nothing was done by mother or daughters without her. The girls came to her to know if they might accept an invitation. Their

mother asked her advice on all matters connected with the estate. Both Lady Endsleigh and her daughters regarded Sobieska as their best counsellor; so no wonder that four horses came at a fast gallop to Doctor Tachbrook's when she was suddenly taken ill.

When the Doctor reached Miss Chlopicki's room, which was one of the most luxurious in the house, he found her lying supine, perfectly still, her changeable eyes wide open: there was no sensible pulse. His first step was to turn out fussy Lady Endsleigh and her daughters, who were in a state of chronic lamentation. Then he took a lancet, and slightly punctured a vein in her beautiful brown arm: the blood moved not. He applied to the delicate nostrils strong *liquor ammoniae:* there was no sign of consciousness.

"It is a cataleptic trance," he said to Lady Endsleigh, whose anxiety was almost amusing: surely never was governess so valued before. "One person should always be in the room with her, and not more than one; the moment she shows signs of awaking, give her wine—a tumbler of champagne with a desert-spoonful of brandy in it."

"How long will this dreadful trance last?" inquired her Ladyship.

"Impossible to say. She may recover in a week; she may be cataleptic for a year. The great point is, that she should never for a moment be left alone."

"You will come often, Doctor Tachbrook," said her Ladyship.

"Daily."

He kept his promise. The trance lasted only five days. It terminated, by a fortunate accident, during one of the Doctor's visits. He was alone with his patient, watching with the curiosity of a physicist the unchanged, unlighted colour of her wide open eyes. Suddenly, as he was gazing upon them, he fancied that a scintilla of violet light came from their pupils.

"She is coming back," he thought, and prepared for her the magic draught.

He was right. He continued looking into her eyes, and it seemed to him as if they exerted upon his a strange magnetic power. He was aware that she claimed to possess this power, at that time new and startling, though old, at least, as the Pyramids; and,

though by nature and profession incredulous, he could not help feeling that there was some strange attraction in this young woman's eyes.

The violet scintilla grew to a definite flame of light. The eye began to live. A look of recognition gradually grew there. Sobieska shuddered and moved. The Doctor brought the glass to her lips, and she drank a little.

"Yes, I knew you would be here," she began to say, speaking slowly and painfully; "I saw you from the window of papa's palace."

"You must not talk now," said the Doctor, "or you will tire yourself. Drink a little and rest."

She obeyed. After a while, however, she grew restless, and said to the Doctor—

"How long have I been away?"

"Five days," he said.

"Yes; that is what I reckoned. I have been to see papa, who is in some other world. He has a lovely palace there, and a great park with deer, where he hunts, and a gallery of pictures of all the famous things he did in this world. There is one by Rembrandt of his cutting down an officer who insulted a lady

that was taken prisoner. It is such a delightful place! From its windows you can see the earth—for they are made of telescopic glass, so that the most distant things seem close by. I saw you quite clearly sitting in this room, and looking at what you thought was me, though it was merely my body. Papa pointed you out to me, and I knew you at once."

Doctor Tachbrook listened, with a kind of belief that the young lady could not yet have gathered up her scattered senses. Her next remark made him feel certain thereon.

"Fancy what papa said! He said, 'You will marry that learned physician.' How would you like such a fate, Doctor Tachbrook?"

CHAPTER II.

A STRANGE STORY.

"She is a woman, therefore may be won."

It will be evident to persons of discernment that our singular Polish maiden was not quite restored to her normal condition, and wholly awakened from her trance, at the time when she informed her sage medical adviser that it was her fate to marry him, and consequently his to marry her.

Although she possessed the mystic constitution of the Delphic sybil, she did not lack the modesty of the ordinary maid.

When she was thoroughly awakened to the material everyday world, she did not remember that she had made love in an unusual manner to Doctor Tachbrook whilst on the way to earth and in the portal of the Chamber of Dreams.

There is a curious fact which we ought to note with reference to abnormal states of being. A man when drunk has been proved to remember circumstances which occurred in a previous state of inebriation, while in his sober condition he had been utterly unable to recall them. His drunken memory is tenacious only of his drunken actions; when sober he remembers clearly only what he did while sober.

Sobieska Chlopicki, though her eyes never wholly lost the mysterious magnetism which was their birthright, yet returned absolutely from her dreamland to her old life.

Doctor Tachbrook did not become quite restored to the serene plane of existence upon which he had formerly stood.

He was a man with a considerable taste for mystery, though he possessed a keen clear brain which allowed it to be obfuscated by no hallucinatory cobwebs. The medical profession, in however materialistic and incredulous armour it may fence itself, nevertheless, is not quite blind to the occult influences of which sometimes a glimmering is vouchsafed to the student. However much in outward art the

medical physiological leaders of opinion may ridicule Théophile Gautier's idea, "*Sur les sciences occultes les sciences officielles n'ont pas dit leur dernier mot*," yet many of them only do so because such a course is official and orthodox. Many of them, like Gautier, have known men like Balzac, and have had their inmost and secret faith shaken as to the omniscience of the authorised text-books. Some are known to meet together to discuss with closed doors those occult elements of human nature, these psychologic puzzles and magnetic marvels, which it would disturb the placidity of society and the nerves of their wealthiest patients to hear of.

Doctor Tachbrook, in addition to having a private taste for the so-called abnormal, was also a man not wholly insensible to the normal feminine magic. Although not far from forty, he was one of those men who grow mellower every year up to seventy; he was by no means crabbed by study, and never dreamed that a male human being is otherwise than amorous and young at forty.

As he was returning home he considered his position. Here was a most interesting

psychologic study ready to hand. Here also was a most interesting and weird maiden evidently only waiting to be wooed, evidently bound to him, even though unconsciously, by a magnetic spell that he had but to awaken to call into action. He was not a superstitious man, but whether or no he had absolute belief in the spiritual palaces with telescopic glass windows of his patient's papa, he nevertheless considered it probable that her dream-message to him was founded upon some fact of their mutual suitability.

"She's a sweet allurement," he said to himself, "and if she tries to manage me as she has managed poor infatuated Lady Endsleigh and her daughters, why, I'll mesmerise her."

That night Doctor Tachbrook dreamed of Prince Chlopicki's palace. There was the lordly deer park; there was the Rembrandtesque picture gallery; there were the telescopic windows, through which he could see his lengthy form wrapped in cosy bachelor bed-clothes in the fire-lit room of the red-brick house in the well-known street of the village of Rothescamp in the valley; there, too, in his dream was Sobieska, more lovely and magnetic than ever.

Septimus Tachbrook, when he awoke the next morning and found that the princess of his dream was not by his side, stretched out his lengthy limbs, yawned, and felt rather forlorn.

After breakfast, of which he partook with more than usual appetite, for dream-wanderings during night produce a sensation of emptiness and chill in the stomach the next morning; after breakfast, his meditations were so far advanced that he had decided to undergo further the enchantments of the fairy princess.

As she had only revived from her trance the evening before, of course his visit could be made professional and tête-à-tête. Otherwise he would only have been able to see his charmer in the presence of Lady Endsleigh, and such a selection from her half-a-dozen daughters as happened to be at the time in the drawing-room.

He went to the house. Just as his brougham was turning down the avenue he was stopped by a footman who bore a letter in his hand from Lady Endsleigh, which he was on the way to deliver at the surgery.

The Doctor told his coachman to drive on, and sat down calmly to read her Ladyship's letter. It was as follows :—

"Dear Doctor Tachbrook,—Come at once! We are all extremely uneasy about dear Miss Chlopicki. What do you think? She positively declares that she must return to Poland at once. We can get no reason from her for such a strange proceeding, and greatly fear that her indisposition cannot be yet entirely removed! Do come as soon as you can! She says she must leave us at noon! It is all very extraordinary; and we all feel so terrified, as if something dreadful were going to happen.—Yours faithfully, SELINA ENDSLEIGH."

"This is a pretty business!" thought the Doctor; "so sensitive an organisation is so soon put out of gear. Still the constitution is manifestly a rare and splendid one, and a little care will soon set the disturbance to rights."

As he entered the house, he met Lady Endsleigh and four of her daughters in the hall. The two youngest were in hysterics in their bedrooms, and commotion had evidently

been acting upon all. Ceremony was abandoned. "O Doctor!" said her ladyship, "I'm so glad you've come; you'll find Miss Chlopicki in her boudoir. Please see her at once, and relieve us of our dreadful fears!"

"She's having her boxes packed," said one of the girls.

"She's had nothing to eat this morning," said another; while a third chimed in, "She even refused some oysters and *sal volatile* I took up to her half an hour ago."

Doctor Tachbrook went up-stairs. Sobieska was in her boudoir, as had been stated. It was true, too, that she was packing her boxes. Several articles of wearing apparel, as well as her collection of jewellery, several handsome pieces of which had been the gift of the Endsleigh women, lay scattered on the floor.

She started as the Doctor entered, and then looked flurriedly round the room, while an intense blush shot visibly through her olive skin over face and neck. He marked the violet scintilla returning to her eye.

She had not been expecting the Doctor so soon, although well aware that Lady Endsleigh had sent for him. She had not meant to see

him, and even imagined that she had locked her door.

This precaution she had inadvertently omitted; and now it was too late to bar out the foe. She stood fronting the Doctor with eyes fixed on the ground, and a subtle observer might have observed the difficultly restrained and concealed hard-drawn panting of her heart. She wore no longer the assured, almost commanding, manner of old. The pallor of her skin remained; but even when the first sudden blush had faded from her cheeks, there was still beneath the surface that appearance of a hidden fire, burning more luminously than ever. Altogether her appearance, if more unearthly on account of the weird and unusual hue of her complexion, was yet more human and feminine than usual, inasmuch as the change of her manner from cold and subjugating to timid and unassertive, added much to the charm of her uncommon and ordinarily too statuesque beauty.

Doctor Tachbrook happily had studied something of human nature in addition to his drier professional researches in physics. He had seen a singular flash produced from her

eyes, in addition to the flurry which filled them, and the look of vexation even with which she had greeted him.

Whether the Doctor's guess as to the cause was absolutely and fully correct, it would be impossible with certainty to determine; but this is what he whispered to himself—

"No longer superhuman: the woman has arrived. Could she have any remembrance of her concluding remark to me last night? Perhaps some flash of feeling of it has touched her without its being definite enough in meaning to put into words."

Being a man of the world, in addition to a man of science, a gentleman, and a possible lover, he did nothing foolish.

"Miss Chlopicki," he said, in a decided and professional tone, "will you be kind enough to inform me what important work you are about here? You ought not to have quitted the sofa for a minute. I must request an immediate return to it: your conduct is most imprudent."

A curious change of expression came over Sobieska's face. A physiognomist would have said that a feeling of relief had passed

over it: that a sense of painful suspense and some agitation of shame had been apparently oppressing her, but were now partially or temporarily removed.

She looked up timidly but with a curious fleet glance that passed over his carefully guarded face, as if to read his inmost secrets.

"I find it is necessary for me to return to Poland at once," she said, with a forced *sang-froid.*

"Nonsense!" replied the Doctor, promptly; "it would be fatal for you to travel in your present state; oblige me by following out my instructions, and be good enough to lie down at once."

Sobieska, with a feeble remonstrance and repetition of her plea about leaving for Poland, obeyed his instructions.

Doctor Tachbrook rang the bell—a servant appeared—and the face of one of the least hysterical of Lady Endsleigh's six daughters was seen behind.

Her the Doctor did not appear to notice, and as Sobieska had not caught her eye, she retired. He said to the servant, "A red mullet and a glass of sherry, with a chop and

a glass of stout to follow, as rapidly as possible."

Then he turned to his patient: "You have not eaten this morning, Miss Chlopicki, I believe?"

"No," she stammered—she who was never known to stammer before.

"Most injudicious, most foolish!" replied the Doctor. At every strong word of this kind which he made use of, a very close student of Miss Chlopicki's face would have said that a weight seemed to be lifted off her. The Doctor observed it, and formed his own conclusions. "Loving her self-consciousness," he thought, "she thinks now that her making any unvirginal remarks to me must have been a delusion of her imagination."

He rang the bell again. "Ask Lady Endsleigh if she will be kind enough to step up here for one moment!" he said to the servant.

Lady Endsleigh had been afraid to enter the room before. Her governess's prolonged trance had much shaken her nerves, and now that there appeared a beginning of new and unintelligible vagaries on Miss Chlopicki's

part, she had been employing her time chiefly in wringing her hands and taking miniature doses of curaçoa in her own room, in order to fortify her in case her remarkable governess should prove to be going mad. But now as the interview was to be in the all-powerful Doctor's presence she felt reassured, and proceeded up-stairs.

"Miss Chlopicki," said that gentleman, as her Ladyship entered the room, "is suffering from a slight febrile malady consequent upon exhaustion, arising from her not having taken sufficient food after recovery from her nervous attack. I have taken the liberty of ordering lunch for her."

"Then she is not going to start for Poland to-day?" said Lady Endsleigh, rather inconsequently.

"Certainly not, my dear lady; quite impossible for her to travel for a fortnight. Indeed, highly doubtful whether such a journey could safely be performed within a month, or even whether it ought to be attempted at all."

Lady Endsleigh looked reassured, and after saying, "Then we will not let her go,"

came by degrees to chat pleasantly, the Doctor carefully leading the conversation. With Lady Endsleigh in the room, something of Sobieska's usual bearing gradually returned, as if the presence of a person over whom she was conscious of intellectual superiority, and over whom she had been wont to exert much half-unconscious influence, restored her her strength.

Soon the lunch which had been ordered arrived, and under the Doctor's scientific explanations and warnings the invalid managed to eat it.

In a short time one of the daughters joined the party, and the conversation became more general and ordinary in its character. The oppression which had been weighing on more than one of the household gradually lifted off; and the weirdness of such abnormal matters as trance, and the unpleasant feelings caused by unaccountable eccentricities, began to wear away.

Septimus Tachbrook stayed more than an hour, excusing himself professionally on the ground that Miss Chlopicki's digestion required careful attention.

It was to him a most curious time.

Sobieska sat on the sofa, looking exquisitely charming in the glow of returning health, and in the newly-gained freedom from an indefinable consciousness of some strange relation to the Doctor. She did not quite lose the sense of a singular rapport with regard to him, but the dread of unmaidenly nearness to him faded somewhat from her mind, being relegated as it were from her nerves as they grew serener to the more mysterious depths of her spirit.

On the Doctor she looked, or appeared to look, with the same eyes as of old, whenever he had seen her on the occasion of his friendly *occasional* calls upon Lady Endsleigh.

But ever and anon there seemed to him to be a subtle and novel element in her look, a kind of wooing, unrealised by her, and proceeding from the very depths of her unconsciousness. If her outward demeanour was ordinary and merely polite, this inward demeanour manifested itself by flashes of ineffable and extraordinary fascination.

By the time the Doctor departed, the

portions of his soul which were divided from those devoted to science, and were set apart for love, were filled to the utmost. His whole being for the hour seemed almost to forget science and its incredulities, and to live in love and its faiths.

As he returned home, through the avenue, after engaging to call again the morning following, his scientific voice said within him, "All smooth now, possibly, now that we have tranquillised the excessive maidenly self-consciousness and reproach." And all the while, through day and night, through work and dream, his love voice kept repeating, "An exquisite girl, a fascinating spirit, a magnetic miracle, an adorable woman."

Septimus Tachbrook called at the Hall often and often, at first professionally, and afterwards without that excuse.

Sobieska, being wooed in ordinary fashion, and not wooing as she seemed to see herself in the horror of a half-remembered dream, did not manifest more terror and reluctance than are usual with maidens who are truly wooed and truly won. The glances of ineffable fascination that at first

had flashed timidly from the deepest founts of her inner soul, gradually grew in volume, and seemed to come from less distant regions of her eyes, and to be glowing closer and closer to her lover.

And when the day came that, in manly, straightforward language, normal and unmystical, he told her that he loved her, she was able to make effable those ineffable gleams of her spirit, and to say in homely, mortal speech the little sweet word, Yes.

She married that learned physician, and the pair proceeded to enter that lovely palace of love that had appeared in her dreams to be her father's, but is in reality universal. Doctor Tachbrook had met with his fate.

CHAPTER III.

A MAGNETIC LADY.

"FLORIO. . . . See her eyes!
They look you through, they make you shrink and shudder;
Yet, for all that, they hold you close, and bind you
As loadstone steel. You cannot soon forget
Those eyes; they haunt you o' nights; they make you wonder . . .
Eyes are they, or strange orient talismans
Set in a pretty woman's giddy head
To madden men?" —*Old Play.*

ADAM, when he married Lilith, must have felt rather perplexed as to how to manage her. So must the chivalrous gentleman who married Undine. So, questionless, do a great many persons of both sexes who have the ill luck to wed those whom they cannot understand. Doctor Septimus Tachbrook, however, was a man of unusual perspicacity; he had the gift of insight, which is the best gift of any doctor, moral or physical. He

saw clearly that his young wife (she was not much more than half his age) had a curious inexplicable faculty which enabled her to influence others as the serpent influences the bird, or the snake-charmer the serpent. She became of immense use to him, for she possessed the clairvoyant faculty; and when a new patient was heard of, had a knack of discovering what was the matter without diagnosis.

Not many years before had Mesmer been flourishing in Paris, magnetising ladies and trees, while sturdy Benjamin Franklin did his best to demolish him. Between two such men there is no osculating point. Mesmer was an imaginative quack; Franklin was an unimaginative philosopher. Mesmer had an inkling of a great mystery, and tried to make money of it; Franklin would have scorned the thought of making money, but could not apprehend a mystery. Hence they were not fairly matched, and Franklin's unanswerable arguments were practically answered—since Mesmer flourished.

Doctor Tachbrook made Lady Endsleigh and her six daughters very unhappy by

taking Sobieska away; but they gave her superb presents, and it was decided they should never have another governess. They were always coming over to Rothescamp-in-the-Valley to see her. She still advised Lady Endsleigh, still kept the girls in order. Indeed, she very soon became the adviser of the whole village; and as she insisted on cleanliness and ventilation, the Doctor used to say she was spoiling his practice.

Over Doctor Tachbrook himself Sobieska exerted a curious influence. He had rather a restless temper, and was apt to think more of a scientific experiment than of all his patients. Sobieska did for him all his delicate manipulations; she taught him tranquillity; in the pleasant evenings, after the day's work and worry, she calmed him with choice ballads sung to harp or guitar—ballads that were usually improvisations, words and music too. Here is one :—

I.

She was tall and fair, and strange and strong,
Helen of Troy.
To her did the world's worst war belong,
And for many heroes grievous wrong;
But ah! there was also Homer's song,
Worth more annoy.

II.

She came, men say, of a strain divine,
Helen of Troy.
The dew on her lips outwent all wine,
The light in her eyes surpassed starshine,
The pulse of her fair breasts said, *Be mine!*
Lady of joy.

III.

Thou shalt never die; thou art here this day,
Helen of Troy.
So long as the sweet spring breezes play,
And the swallow swings in the air of May,
Why the men will woo and the girls be gay,
Helen of Troy!

The Doctor grew quite a different man under his wife's tendence, and the village and the vicinage declared that his marriage had marvellously improved him.

Unhappily for him, his married life did not last long. Sobieska died three years after their marriage, leaving a child for her husband to take care of. Doctor Tachbrook was miserable; he had lost one half of his soul—he longed to recover it. Gladly would he also have passed to the other world; but the Destinies had other designs. He lived more than half-a-century after his wife's death; and during all those years had a firm belief that she was present with him. Was he mad, think you?

The child lived — a boy. He was christened Harold, a family name of the Tachbrooks. He was the oddest of boys. His father let him do just what he pleased. His fancies were eccentric. He sometimes liked cricket and football with the village youngsters, and at such games he showed easy mastery. He sometimes liked to shut himself up in the Doctor's library and read Homer for hours. When his father talked to him about his irregular habits, he said that some invisible being told him what to do; he could not help it, he was under orders. The Doctor, who had reason for believing that

> "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
> Than are dreamt of in your philosophy,"

did not thwart his son's vagaries. He had a kind of superstition that the wife he had lost held some communication with her boy.

The young squire, as everybody in Rothescamp called him, since he was a true Tachbrook, often lounged into the Tachbrook Arms of a morning. The landlord, Tom Ockit, was rather a humourist, and had rather a pretty niece. 'Edith Ockit was a thorough

lady, though orphanhood had thrown her on the jolly avuncular innkeeper. Her father was an artist of no common power, and the "*O. O.*" of Orlando Ockit commands thousands to-day where he, poor fellow, would have been glad of a ten-pound note. When he died, his jolly brother Tom, innkeeper and farmer, took in the girl right readily; but he was incapable of seeing that her fine fibre was unsuited to doing barmaid's business. Harold saw it: Harold fell in love.

Edith was proud, and slightly inaccessible. Harold played a waiting game. He talked to her at eventide. He told her the most abominable stories. An active imagination is very useful in lovemaking. Harold's was very active; and in course of time he contrived to subjugate Edith: which done, he thought he would talk to his father.

I should here observe that when Lady Endsleigh died she left Harold a few thousand pounds, "as a testimony of gratitude to Doctor Tachbrook." The Doctor would not be persuaded to accept it for his son till the executors assured him that if he did not there would be a Chancery suit to

make him, which might perhaps ruin the estate.

Well, Harold came to the Doctor.

"Father," he said, "I want to marry."

"You are young," said the Doctor, gravely.

"True," said Harold. "But I have been dreaming, night after night, of my mother, and she tells me to marry Edith Ockit, and to go to Australia within a year."

"I should once have said," his father replied, "that such dreams were mere reflections of what you thought of during the day. But I have seen so many curious experiments that I cannot reach a conclusion. You shall have your way. Edith Ockit is not your equal in birth, but she seems a remarkably good girl. As to Australia, I see no objection. I shall miss you, but I must find some study to enliven me. You have a little money to start with: I can send you some more if you should want it."

Harold Tachbrook married Edith Ockit—a calm and thoughtful girl, who quieted her husband's restlessness. But he was still haunted by a phantom that bade him go to the antipodes: so a few months (I forget

the number) after marriage he engaged a passage for himself and his wife in a well-found sailing vessel, and started for Australia Felix.

The passage was long and troublesome. The winds blew wilder than ever around the Cape of Good Hope. They were blown about to the verge of despair. Driven out of their course, they were becalmed off Borneo: and there occurred what is inevitable if the human race is to continue to exist. Mrs Tachbrook gave birth to a child. It was a girl. It cost poor Edith her life, and her body was buried in the sea, amid the tears of passengers and sailors. Folly, of course: but the sadness of death seems increased when the corpse must be left in the untraceable depths of ocean, where no stone can be placed, no flowers planted.

Mrs Tachbrook, when first she felt what was going to happen, had a presentiment that she was not fated to survive her trouble. Of this to her husband she said nothing, knowing well how miserable it would make his loving heart. But the feeling haunted her, perhaps rendering more certain the

doom she dreaded: and she thought very sadly, indeed, of Harold left alone in the world, of her unborn child without a mother's loving care. She should never kiss its pretty lips, or lave in fair water its tender form, or feel its little fingers on her breast. That was her presentiment: it proved true.

Believing that she should die, she wanted to tell Harold concerning an old school friend whom she dearly loved, and to ask him to find her out if she should return to England. Friendships made at school are often durable. This girl was named Mary Fane; she was under the common height, a delicate creature that you might put under a glass shade. Every part of her body had curious beauty, both of form and colour; her ears were little shells, her nails pure mother-o'-pearl, her mouth a rose-bed. She was tremulous all through with fire and fun. All her school fellows were in love with her; but her chosen friend was Edith Ockit.

Mary Fane was terribly naughty, but so irresistibly amusing that her naughtinesses were always forgiven. They were the outcome of a high and daring spirit in a lively,

lovely form. To her might well have been applied what Wordsworth wrote of Hartley Coleridge in his childhood :—

> "Thou art so exquisitely wild,
> I think of thee with many fears,
> For what may be thy lot in future years."

She was the plague and the delight of the school; was more punished and more petted than all the rest put together. She was just the sort of girl whom a wise and loving husband might mould into a perfect woman. Unluckily she was not so constituted as to be likely at first sight to attract a man of this class.

When Edith Ockit left school and went to live with her uncle, an active correspondence (active for days of dear postage) was kept up between her and Mary Fane. It gradually slackened: Edith was very busy with Harold Tachbrook, and perhaps Miss Mary was very busy with somebody else. If so, I warrant he had a fine time of it.

When Edith became Mrs Tachbrook, she had not heard from her friend for a long time. Preparation for travel gave her no time to discover where she was. On the

voyage she had often talked to Harold, in a pleasant, simple way, about her school life: and Mary Fane was so frequently named that Harold laughingly pretended to be jealous.

As poor Edith grew weaker and weaker before her baby's birth, with the sad presentiment of never regaining strength, she was haunted by strange dreams of Mary Fane, in all kinds of terrible difficulty, calling to her across the sea for help. A sensible woman enough, Edith recognised these dreams as the phantasms of illness and weakness, yet she could not help saying to her husband—

"Harold, when we go back to England, I want to find out Mary Fane. I cannot help thinking she is likely to get into trouble."

"Very likely, indeed, my pet, from all that you have told me of her," said Harold, laughing. He did not, nor indeed did the Doctor, imagine Edith so weak as she really was. Her cheerful resolute spirit deceived them.

But when she died, and he felt his great loss, he thought of her anxiety about Mary

Fane. He resolved that on his return to England he would seek for her. After he had seen his dear love buried in the illimitable sea, he thought more of this last fancy of hers than even of his little unconscious daughter.

This little baby girl was the pet of the ship. She was called Miranda. She was happy enough—for there were cows on board, and plentiful milk: there were also ladies on board, and plentiful petting. Harold Tachbrook was miserable. He could not bear to look at his little girl: she was such a dread reminder of her mother's death. The only thing that consoled him was his firm faith that his mother's spirit communicated with him and gave him guidance. He had left his father; he had lost his wife; his child was a baby: but he was not alone, for he recognised the spirit of his mother. That spirit had in a vision of the night mapped Melbourne before his eyes, and had pointed to a place in that map as if ordering him to go thither. Harold resolved to go.

CHAPTER IV.

UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS.

"Born far from merry England, English folk
See her in dreams. For them the summer breeze
Murmurs through mighty woods of beech and oak:
They hear her minster bells across the leas;
In vision they behold her cities fair,
And drink her rivulets, and breathe her happy air."

MELBOURNE was a small place when Harold Tachbrook reached it, bringing his baby-girl, much wondering what he could do with her. The famous English city was but a few years old, and scanty signs appeared of its marvellous development. When Harold landed, he seemed to recognise in its right-angled streets the town of his dreams; and he made his way to the particular point which he fancied had been indicated to him. What he found was a rather dingy lodging-house. It was kept by a

middle-aged woman called Brown, who had come out with her husband. That gentleman had gone into the bush some years before, and Mrs Brown had pretty well given him up altogether. She was a Wiltshire farmer's daughter, homely and good-natured. Harold's interview with her resulted in his leaving his hotel to lodge there, while he decided what he would do; and kind-hearted Mrs Brown, who had no children, except a married daughter in England, took to little Miranda at once.

Close to Mrs Brown's establishment, rather dingy, but not uncomfortable, there was a large piece of waste ground, where rubbish was thrown, and dogs and cats congregated. The old lady one day remarked that she wished she could rent it. At present it was quite a nuisance, and she might make a useful garden of it in time. Harold Tachbrook, who was wandering about the infant city in search of adventure, amused himself by making inquiry as to the ownership of this waste spot, and found its proprietor in the person of an oyster-vendor, who was only too glad to sell his property for fifty pounds. Mrs Brown was delighted, especially when he set to work

energetically to make a fence round it, and to lay out a kitchen-garden. It took some time, some money also, for garden-seeds were at that time scarce in Melbourne. But Harold worked hard, and made Mrs Brown quite a pleasant garden in a month or two.

One day Harold was down at the docks, smoking a short pipe (for tobacco is always your Englishman's consoler when other consolation fails), and saw a ship come in—the *Albatross* from Liverpool—with a large number of emigrants. Looking curiously at the motley groups that landed, he was specially struck by a boy of about fourteen, in jacket and trousers of blue serge, who sprang ashore with only a small bag in his hand, and walked up the beach as if he meant to annex Australia.

"I'll talk to that young gentleman," said Harold to himself; "he's a runagate, I guess."

So he accosted the boy, and asked him where he thought of going.

"O, I don't care," said the youngster, laughing; "I've run away from home, and mean to see the world. If there's any place you think will suit me, I shall feel thankful for knowing it."

"Well," said Harold Tachbrook, much amused, "I lodge at a pretty comfortable place; will you come and look at it? But where is your luggage?"

"Luggage! this bag is all I have. I may as well tell you that I ran away from school, and determined to put myself a good way off. The fact is, my governor hates me—I don't know why; and though he has plenty of money, he sent me to a wretched little school, where nothing was taught, and where the fool of a master took delight in flogging. One day I thought I wouldn't stand it any longer; so, when this fool wanted to flog me, I gave him a jolly good licking, and packed up my bag and went off. I had plenty of money, for an aunt of mine had given me a lot of jewellery my grandmother left for me, and one ring paid my passage out here. Look! here's a satisfactory roll of paper."

The mad boy took from his pocket a roll of bank-notes, and handed them to Harold.

"What are you going to do?" asked the latter.

"O, *I* don't know. Enjoy myself and see Australia."

The boy, who gave his name as Tom Jones, which probably was not his name, and who had a fine patrician daring about him, went home with Harold to Mrs Brown. He settled down easily in his new quarters. He took a tremendous fancy to baby Miranda, and would nurse her all day long. He helped Harold Tachbrook in the garden. He pervagated the infant city, which seemed to grow day by day, so rapid was its movement at that time. He attached himself closely to Harold, who, for his part, quite enjoyed the youngster's energy and pluck.

Tiring at length of Melbourne, they determined to go on an exploring tour. Harold saw that his little girl was in good hands with Mrs Brown; so leaving her plenty of money for the child's comfort, he and his young comrade set out to explore the wilds of Australia, at that time a land utterly unknown. Away they went, gaily enough, into the bush, taking with them a waggon and a team of light horses, plentiful provisions, and two enormous mastiffs. Also, they were not without firearms, which are more fatal than the boomerang.

What adventures had they? Faith, many bushrangers were out in those days: Harold Tachbrook and Tom Jones killed a few. They killed emus, too, and kangaroos, and made friends with the natives, and lived a half-wild life that seemed to sunburn their souls. Only two books they had between them: Harold had a Bible and Tom Jones had a Horace. There were occasions when they read them very thoroughly.

By and by they bought between them a great sheep-walk, and went in for oxen as well. They were successful. They had a very snug log-hut, where they enjoyed life thoroughly. Occasionally one or the other went to Melbourne, and Mrs Brown was supplied with funds, and Miranda with presents, and letters were sent to England,—that is to say, Harold Tachbrook wrote to the Doctor, but young Tom Jones wrote to no one. Nor did he receive any letters. It was clear that he had successfully isolated himself, and that no one had the remotest notion of his whereabouts.

When Harold wrote to his father, he did not forget Mary Fane, whose fate had so

strongly impressed his wife on her deathbed. The Doctor made many inquiries about her; he could only discover that she had left the school at which she and Edith were together; that she had married and gone abroad with her husband; but the name of her husband he failed to find out.

Eighteen years had passed. Harold Tachbrook was a stalwart sunburnt long-bearded fellow, hard as nails, brown as a berry, ready for anything from pitch-and-toss to manslaughter. He was in the very prime of life, and had never known five minutes of dyspepsia. Tom Jones, now about thirty-two, was young for his years; he had lived a fine wild simple Homeric life, without a worry to wrinkle his brow; the boy that Harold remembered when he landed at Melbourne, had developed into a man of wonderful power and resolve, with brain and muscle both in noble order. Only the worst of it is, that brain gets few opportunities in a new country.

One day the two comrades were sitting side by side in front of their rough dwelling. It was sunset—such a sunset as one

might see in England. They simultaneously thought of *home.*

"Tom," said Harold Tachbrook, "that American fellow's offer for our sheep-run is not a bad one. Let's sell and go home. I want to see Old England again. I want to see my father."

"I don't want to see mine," said Tom Jones, "but I have no objection to seeing England. Let's start at once."

They sold their property—excellent well. They returned to Melbourne to dwell awhile with Mrs Brown. Miss Miranda had become charming: her hair was light, her eyes and eyebrows dark; she was five feet six inches high, and as agile as Artemis. Of course Tom Jones fell in love with her at once.

He had not been in Melbourne before for three years, and in the interval she had grown from a child to a woman. Having spent eighteen years in the bush without seeing any specimen of female humanity except the aboriginal darkie, he was rather wonder-stricken by the apparition of his friend's daughter. For she *was* a pretty

girl—in fact, a girl of the old Venetian type of beauty; in addition whereto she was a girl of amazing cleverness, which cleverness had received cultivation.

Thus did it happen. Among the guests at Mrs Brown's lodging-house was a young German, engaged as a clerk in one of the Melbourne banks. He had the usual German superficial omniscience and love of lecture. He took to teaching Miranda, and Miranda learnt easily, and indeed rather amazed her instructor by finding out the meaning of things which to him were mere formulæ. He taught this girl, consciously, all he knew; unconsciously, much more: for she had an instinctive power of carrying out to further issues any scrap of knowledge that reached her. This German was a mere smatterer, who loved not knowledge for its own sake, but liked the ostentation of knowledge; still, even from him, Miranda Tachbrook learnt things which young ladies of her age seldom know.

She was delighted at the thought of going to England. Can you not understand how a child, born in some colony or dependency

where everything is new and rough, must long to realise England? Fancy being an English boy or girl born at the antipodes, and not able to picture to one's self an English mayor or an English oak, a foxhunt or an express train, a regiment of the Guards or a cathedral, the House of Commons or the Derby! Our little Undine was born at sea; but well hath it been said by Walter Landor—

"Ubicunque pontus est ibi Britannia est."

Miranda was sorry to leave dear old Mrs Brown. The old lady had taken care of her since she was a month old, and had made a great pet of her. She had taught her to read and write when she was a very little girl, and had made all her little frocks, and had taken pride in so doing. She remembered how, when Miranda grew so fast, she was so proud of being up to Brownie's waist. She always called the old lady Brownie. And then she reached up to Brownie's shoulder, and in time left Brownie, who was rather short, far behind. The old lady was incessantly talking on such subjects during these last days before Miranda was to leave her. "I did hope, sir," she said to Harold, "that you would have settled

down here, in the new country, and have built a fine house, and made my young lady the mistress of it; though I daresay some good gentleman would have been wanting to run off with the pretty dear," and she cast a side look at Tom.

"And no doubt, Mr Tom," she said to him, "you'll be marrying one of these fine English ladies when you get to England, and I hope you'll send me a paper when your marriage is announced."

"O, we won't forget you, Mrs Brown; but so far as marriage is concerned, I could be content to marry in this country."

"But not if a certain lady went out of it, sir."

"Well, Mrs Brown, when I am married I will send for you to come to my wedding if you like."

"I am an old woman now, sir, and travelling about won't suit me: but I should like to hear of you and Mr Harold sometimes, and I am sure my young lady won't forget me. You won't forget poor old Brownie, will you, dear?" she said to Miranda.

"No, Brownie, I shall always think of you,

and write to you very often, and I will have a picture of myself painted in England, and will send it to you."

Poor old Mrs Brown went up to her bedroom to have a little cry, and to hug some relics of Miranda's childhood that she had by her. A little pinafore was always kept, for Mrs Brown remembered when Miranda one day said as she put on her pinafore, "Brownie, I am getting a woman now—women don't wear pinafores. Mayn't I wear an apron like you do. Lend me one of your aprons, I am ashamed of my pinafore."

"But I musn't waste time," thought Mrs Brown, "there is plenty yet to be done to make everything comfortable for them on board the vessel. Ah, what a mighty fine ship it is! Times are altered since I came out here in a sailing vessel. I wonder whether England is much altered. I should like to see it again, and see my dear child's home. And I wonder what my own old home in Wiltshire is like! I daresay it is altered; but I should know it again."

Harold Tachbrook and Tom Jones both longed to see the old country again; while

Miranda, born somewhere near the equator, and therefore a little citizen of ocean, could not help longing to see the island of her race.

Before Harold Tachbrook left Melbourne, he took care to make good Mrs Brown comfortable. He was the better able to do this because eighteen years before he had fenced in a garden for her. The growth of Melbourne had placed her house in the most fashionable of localities, and that bit of garden was coveted by an hotel company as the most "eligible" in the city of Melbourne. When Harold Tachbrook was known to be its proprietor, he had these people after him immediately. He showed no eagerness to deal with them; he allowed them to make offer after offer without even answering their letters; and the final result was, that he got thirty thousand pounds for what had originally cost him fifty. So he felt he could afford to make worthy Mrs Brown comfortable for the remainder of her life. This done, he arranged with his friend Tom Jones to start for England; and it was decided they should go together on board the *Mighty Metropolis* steamer, the most famous steamship of the time.

After eighteen years of sheep breeding, Harold Tachbrook and Tom Jones found the world considerably changed. Even as Tachbrook's fifty pounds had become thirty thousand, so everything had waxed vaster. They had come to Australia in a cranky tub; they were to return to England in a floating palace, moving so steadily that you could not be sea-sick if you tried, and carrying on board all the necessities of civilisation. When they went over the ship, they found both the library and the wine-cellar well stocked. It was scarcely possible to imagine anything that was not obtainable.

"I suppose the world has been moving while we have been breeding sheep," said Harold Tachbrook. "I wonder what London will look like when we return?"

"I don't care much about London," said Tom Jones, "for I have seldom been there; but I should like to know whether my old governor is alive still, and if he is as cantankerous as he used to be."

"What do you think about it all?" said Tachbrook to Miranda, who had hardly begun to realise the fact that she had a

father in the flesh. "What is your notion about England, child?"

"I hardly know, papa. I must have a notion about *you*, first. You say I was born at sea: I feel just like a mermaid that has come ashore — a fish out of water. I want to go on board the great steamer: I hope it will pass over the very place where I was born and poor mamma was buried."

"No chance thereof, my child. We go back round Cape Horn."

"I think I must begin to study geography," said Miranda. "It would be dreadful not to know Cape Horn when you saw it, and I am sure I shall not unless somebody gives me a likeness of it. Cape Horn is suggestive of an old woman in an old-fashioned cape, wearing horns."

"Madcap," said her father.

CHAPTER V.

THE "MIGHTY METROPOLIS."

"Where lies the land to which the ship would go?
Far, far ahead, is all her seamen know.
And where the land she travels from? Away,
Far, far behind, is all that they can say."

THAT famous steamship, the *Mighty Metropolis*, carried about five hundred passengers, of whom nearly a hundred were in the saloon. A motley multitude, of course, and quite indescribable within the limits of three volumes. Still there are a few of them that deserve description. The passengers, however, must give place to the captain, Edward Grainger, a man six feet two inches high, whose battered figure-head, in its handsome ugliness, showed that in his time he had fought many ships through many storms. That

osculation of ugliness and beauty is a curious case of my favourite dogma that extremes meet. Grainger was perfectly charming when he talked to a lady, and perfectly furious when he had to fight a hurricane.

Now for a few of the passengers. There were our friends Harold and Miranda Tachbrook, and Tom Jones. There was an elderly gentleman named Wilson, with a wife and some dumpy daughters, and a very diamonded son. The father was going home to be knighted for something or other he had done in the colony. There was a Captain Stuart, dark-eyed and black-bearded, evidently one of those adventurous gentlemen who, like Ancient Pistol, regard the world as an oyster. Stuart was popular, for he could sing comic songs wonderfully, and there was not his equal on board at whist and écarté. There was a poet, Cincinnatus Meunier, who had the wildest eyes and wore the hugest watch-chain ever known. He had been wandering all over the world; had used up Western America and Southern Australia, and now thought he would try London. That city of giant brains may cure his poetic influenza. There were two pretty

girls—twins—orphan daughters of an English gentleman named Mansard, who were going home to the care of their only relation, their maternal grandmother. The poor children, in their deep mourning, looked very unhappy. There was a rather frisky gentleman, called Leary, who showed from the first a decided disposition to be master of the ceremonies, and who started a daily newspaper (in manuscript, of course) called the *Metropolitan.* His first article was very fine.

"The sea is the mother of cities; where the water flows, bringing the masts of all nations, there will cities be built. Nowhere comes the sea without bringing civilisation as well as iodine. We are now on the sea. The *Mighty Metropolis* may be considered as a city, though rather small in girth—a moving city, even as the earth is a travelling planet. Its king is the captain; its archbishop is the chaplain; its premier is the first officer; its *Times* is the *Metropolitan.*"

There was a good deal more of this sort of thing; and it was generally agreed among the passengers, that unless a deputation from the *Times* met Mr Leary the moment he

landed in England, offering him any sum he liked to mention for articles, the leading journal of Europe would have decidedly neglected its duty. There were several families of plutocratic position, who had picked up gold enough in Australia to make them very brilliant in England. To them, of course, it occurred not that birth or rank or culture are, even in the England of to-day, thought more of than gold. There was Jack Manly, whose father had sent him out with eight thousand pounds, and who had come back with eighty, and a considerable contempt for the climate. There was Harry Loraine, who had gone out just to see what Australia was like, and who went back to his chambers in the Albany with a well-founded conviction that Piccadilly was preferable to Collins Street, where every Melbourne gentleman lounges on summer afternoons, when the ladies are abroad. Australians know how to enjoy their December midsummer. There were many more, some of whom there may be occasion to name; but these were the persons most prominent in the saloon group.

When people are shut up together in large

or small numbers for any length of time, it is noticeable that some of them soon take a decided lead. So much for equality. The gentleman who, on board the *Mighty Metropolis*, first attempted to take the lead, was Mr Edward Wilson. He was as pompous as the man whom Theodore Hook crossed Pall Mall to ask whether he was "any one particular." He was going home to be knighted! The sublime idea held him with magnetic power. SIR Edward Wilson! He walked the deck with a feeling that the handle of his name was ready to be prefixed. His superb style especially delighted the hearts of Tom Jones and Harry Loraine.

The *Mighty Metropolis* left Melbourne on May the second; I forget the year. It was the clearest sky in the world, and the serenest sea. Everybody looked on the voyage as a mere trifle—a poetic picnic from Pacific to Atlantic—a pleasant kind of ocean honeymoon. That two or three people managed to experience *mal du mer* before they lost sight of land, was merely a proof of nervous temperament. Nobody need be sea-sick if they only took sufficient champagne. That liquid

was plentiful on board the *Mighty Metropolis;* but Harry Loraine expressed a suspicion that it was flavoured with the essence of elder-flowers. He had drunk wine in many capitals, and on board many steamships. He had come to the conclusion that your Roederer and your Lafitte were a mockery, a delusion, a snare, and that nothing in the world was worthy of touching the English palate except good wholesome ale.

"When I get back to my place," he said to Tom Jones, "I shall get some good strong ale that was brewed when I came of age, and has been walled up ever since. You must come and drink some of it."

"With delight," said our friend Tom. "My governor had some good beer, but I used to get frightfully washy stuff at home; and I don't care for the bottled ale they send us out, though it is very good in its way. I've the recollection of drinking a quart of good ale at a draught."

"You can soon do that in England."

"Ay! in England! England!—Do you know, I am wild to see England again. I ran away from school at fourteen. I have been

breeding sheep ever since. I cannot understand what England is like. I wish this ship would travel faster."

"A thousand miles in four days is good work," said Loraine. "Yet I understand your impatience. I am never impatient myself, for I have been all over the world, and don't know that there is anything new to be seen. You, having lived all the chief part of your life in a colony, may well wonder what civilisation resembles. You know Melbourne: it is a big village. If you were to put a thousand Melbournes together, you would not get London. You cannot imagine London. You cannot conceive the exquisite beauty and grace of a London lady, the easy wit and careless courtesy of a London gentleman. I do not mean Cockneys: I mean the men and women who live in the country many months of the year, but are in London for the season: I mean the real English aristocracy. I like them. I like the girls who believe most firmly that they were brought into the world to look lovely, and dress delightfully, and wear costly diamonds and costlier lace. I like the men who drawl and lounge through life like

Alcibiades, but who know how to fight and make love if opportunities occur. You will be amazed with London, especially if you see all sides of it. There is the daintiest life in the world; also there is the roughest. There is the most exquisite society in the world at the West; there is the roughest mob imaginable at the East. London is a nation in a narrow space. I should like to see what you think of it when you get there."

"I shall be glad of your guidance," said Tom Jones. "I suspect my good friend Tachbrook knows very little about London. We shall both of us want a guide, philosopher, and friend."

"All right," said Loraine. "You shall do what I tell you. I cannot take you in at the Albany, for the excellent reason that I have only one bed, and it is a devilish narrow one. You shall go to Hatchett's Hotel, and I 'll teach you what London is like."

When the *Mighty Metropolis* got well out of the Australasian seas, and the passengers grew tolerably stout of stomach, it was suggested by Captain Grainger that there would be some fun in concerts, private theatricals,

and the like. Stuart and Meunier and Loraine immediately formed themselves into a committee to carry out the idea. They determined to make everybody work, male and female. They made an early attack on Harold Tachbrook.

"Let's have a comedy," said Harold, "a comedy of ocean. We've got a poet on board, Cincinnatus Meunier. He can write a play, I guarantee. What say you, my poetic friend?"

Meunier found the tables turned upon him rather.

"I have written some verse," he said, "but don't think I could write a play."

"Well, I'll give you an idea for nothing. Shakespeare wrote, *As you like it:* do you write, *As you don't like it.* Put in two Rosalinds; it will just suit the two Miss Mansards, who are so absurdly alike. I'll play Jaques if you'll write me some good blank verse, and Tom Jones will make a capital Orlando. Now, O poet! go and begin at once."

"Really the idea is not a bad one," said Loraine. "Substitute for the Forest of Arden

the deck of the *Mighty Metropolis*. It is a grand place for Jaques to soliloquise—

"A fool! a fool! I met a fool on deck,
With many nuggets hanging at his watch chain;
And when he saw me, he exclaimed, 'Old fellow!
I 'm going home to be a lord in England:
They make men lords when they are rich, you know.'
I said I did not know it: and he laughed,
As who should say, 'Well, this man *is* a fool
Not to know English customs better.'
Faith,
He probably is right, and I am wrong,
And great King Mammon makes his puffy peers."

"By George, Loraine, you will have to help our laureate," said Tachbrook. "Come, we 'll talk the matter over with the ladies in the saloon to-night. It will be queer if we cannot get up a play between us."

So full council was that night held, and much chaff transpired. Ultimately it was decided that *As you don't like it* was to be the name of the play; that Mr Cincinnatus Meunier was to write it, putting in as much poetry as he liked, and as much fun as he could; that there were to be two Rosalinds in doublet and hose, who were to fight for Orlando; that various other characters from Shakespeare should be introduced, especially Hamlet and Othello, and Romeo and Juliet,

and Jack Falstaff; and that anybody in the saloon who declined to play any part set down for him or her should be fined champagne all round. The irrepressible Leary constituted himself stage-manager, and the thing was done.

It would be impossible to describe the admirable fun which arose from this new method of treating Shakespeare. Cincinnatus worked out the conception charmingly. The two Miss Mansards were twin Rosalinds; Tom Jones was Orlando, making love to each in turn, and getting scolded by the other; Harold Tachbrook was Jaques; Wilson (Sir Edward) was Hamlet; Jack Manly was Falstaff; Stuart was Othello; Harry Loraine was Romeo, and made Tom Jones quite jealous, for Miranda played Juliet. As thus—

Romeo. "O that I were a glove upon that hand,
That I might touch that cheek.
Juliet. That cheek objects
To being touched by anybody's glove."

Cincinnatus Meunier spoke his own epilogue—

"We are going home, and the strength of steam
Carries us on like a magical dream;
And we have no knowledge of whither we wend,
Save that England—England, lies at the end;—

The land of life and of power and truth,
Where our dear old fathers lie under the sod,
Where we wasted the glory of our joyous youth,
Where live the men who dare believe in God.
So as home we go, as the great sails fill,
We lovingly parody Gentle Will—
The poet of poets, the man of men,
Who held all life in his wondrous ken.
O listen to Falstaff's mighty laugh;
Hear the mad Prince's easy chaff;
Mercutio see, in the street moonlit,
Ready with rapier, ready with wit;
Think of love's fierce fever and fiery fret
Where Romeo embraces his Juliet;
Think of all the scenes in the galleries grand
Which Shakespeare built for his own dear land—
Of his Palace of Poetry, noblest far
That has ever been touched by the morning star.
Ah here, mid-ocean, on the waters dim,
We are at home in England when we talk with him."

"I call that an excellent good epilogue of yours," said Loraine that evening to the poet Cincinnatus, as they were slaking their thirst. "But when you do get to England, I recommend you to get some fellow or other to teach you versification. It's very easy. You should carefully study Dr Watts."

Cincinnatus ejaculated.

CHAPTER VI.

LOTOS-EATING.

——"Ἐπέβημεν
γαίης Λωτοφάγων, οἵ τ' ἄνθινον εἶδαρ ἔδουσιν."

MANY ways are there of eating lotos. Pleasant is it to lie on emerald turf under heavy foliage, talking, or dreaming, or reading some such "summer book" as Curtis's "Lotos-Eating," or those "Leaves from the Diary of a Dreamer," which Pickering published in 1853. Although the Americans are so rapid a race, they excel us in that tranquil style of poetic prose which is represented in such books as these, —in Washington Irving's delightful pictures of the Alhambra and the Generalife, in Longfellow's "Hyperion," in Hawthorne's lovely sketches of both hemispheres, in Thoreau's

wonderful researches into nature's mystery. They seem to catch the magic of the world better than we. The reason is clear. As yet there are wide stretches of wild country in the States. You can get beyond reach of the shriek of steam. You can bury yourself in serene and uninterruptible solitude. There are American villages, too, especially in the West, where life is simple and primitive, calm and idyllic.

Then there are the Adirondac lakes, of which we possess Emerson's magical picture.

"Ten scholars, wonted to lie warm and soft,
In well-hung chambers daintily bestowed,
Lie here on hemlock-boughs, like Sacs and Sioux,
And greet unanimous the joyful change.
. . . . . .
Up with the dawn, they fancied the light air,
That circled freshly in their forest dress,
Made them to boys again. Happier that they
Slipt off their pack of duties, leagues behind,
At the first mounting of the giant stairs.
. . . . . .
Look to yourselves, ye polisht gentlemen!
No city airs or arts pass current here.
The sallow knows the basketmaker's thumb,
The oar, the guide's. Dare you accept the task
He shall impose, to find a spring, trap foxes,
Tell the sun's time, determine the true north;
Or, stumbling on through vast self-similar woods,
To tread by night the nearest way to camp?"

There is, however, a kind of lotos-eating in which I think Englishmen excel all other races; that is, the marine method. Who can yacht like an Englander? Who can enjoy the sunlit sea of noon, the phosphorescent sea of midnight, so absolutely as an Englishman—finding music the while in the song of rope and shroud, voiced like the swallow, and in the musical moan of the water as the ship cuts its way therethrough? Still, we can also sympathize with the American poet's happy experience of lake and mountain. We can find a spring with the diviner's hazel rod, and tell the time of day by a dial whose index is the middle finger; and I have found my way at midnight through the "self-similar woods" of the New Forest to the "Crown" at Lyndhurst, hungering and thirsting for bitter ale and lavender-scented beds, and a joyous morning breakfast of forest bacon, beech-mast fed, and eggs new laid, and butter and bread home-made. These delicacies, and the thought of Leighton's fresco, magnetised me through silvan scene self-similar. I am neither a wise nor a foolish virgin—but I like that fresco.

The quarterdeck of the *Mighty Metropolis* was a regular Castle of Indolence. Mr Wilson and his distinguished family had established themselves on the larboard side; their servants brought up and strewed around the most magnificent wrappers, and the future knight lay among them, looking, as if ocean belonged to him. His wife was florid—queenly; his daughters were vulgar princesses; his son was a delicious mixture of diamonds and dirt. When a stone of the first water calls attention to fingers that demand water, the result is curious. The starboard side had been appropriated by Miranda, who held quite a little court there every morning and evening. Of course she had her father and Tom Jones in close and constant attendance; but she had also the passionate Captain Stuart, the poetic Cincinnatus, the adoring but taciturn Manly, the used-up and yet not altogether useless Loraine. She associated with herself Amy and Alice Mansard, two charming girls, who were beginning to forget some portion of their sorrows under the influence of Miranda's gay and joyous temper. These three formed

a trium-feminate, and governed despotically that corner of the quarterdeck. Even Captain Grainger was submissive in their sacred presence. The dear old Captain was a sea-Launcelot.

Considerable jealousy existed between the two rival leaders of fashion, and this jealousy deepened and intensified when it became apparent that the son and heir of the Wilsons, the diamonded Neoptolemus, preferred the company of Miranda to that of his mother and sisters, not to mention his father. One would have thought that, with so magnificently wise a father, Neoptolemus would never have desired to leave home in search of adventure, even to cross a quarterdeck in quest of a pretty girl. Somehow or other he found Miranda irresistible: there was no withstanding that abundant hair, colour of marigold—those lambent electric eyes, colour of onyx—that little red mischievous mouth, colour of damascene rose. Even Neoptolemus Wilson, a dull fellow, recognised the piquancy of this unusual beauty. His mother and sisters were always worrying him; but he crossed the deck with perfect regularity,

and was found rather a bore by all the other fellows who were in love with Miranda, for everybody else was in the same category. Captain Stuart laid at her pretty feet his dark eyes and hair and beard, and all his past adventures and projects of the future. Stuart was a man of *bonnes fortunes* and of misfortunes. He could not exclaim with the Caroline song-writer—

> "If I were only out of debt,
> As I am out of love!"

for he was always over head and ears in both. Of course he at once had a grand passion for Miranda; but that young lady did not seem very enthusiastic in return. Indeed, she treated all her adorers coolly enough; but Stuart thought himself most favoured, since he was usually chosen to arrange her rugs, and bring her a book or some feminate frivolity nicknamed "work," and generally act the part of a "tame cat." He played that part extremely well.

Not so Cincinnatus the poet. He had brought from Arizona to Australia the mad intoxication of the wild mountain air. He had lived from boyhood in wild and desolate

places, with a sense of infinite solitude around him. What poetry he had in him was receptive rather than originative, was the echo and reflex of the wild life he had seen and known. Many mad deeds had he done, many mad loves had he loved; his history could only be told after dinner to people of strong nerves. The river of adventure that swept through his life was known as it winded by a fringe of blossoming oleander. This was all his poetry; the poetry not of tranquil art, but of a restless spirit. He was a kind of colonial Byron.

> "Pitt is to Addington
> As London is to Paddington,"

said Canning once; and these wild Byronic versifiers are to their chief and lord very much in the same ratio. Byron, great as he was, would have been greater without his mental malady: these minor minstrels resemble him in the mental malady only.

Cincinnatus was laughable, but a trifle rough—a kind of poetic bear. He amused Miranda, and she tamed him. She laughed merrily at his sentiment and cynicism, and criticised the structure of his verse, which was

uncommonly rough, and mercilessly chaffed him about his false pathos and sham bitterness. He would have been angry with her if he could; but who could be angry with a creature so lovely? I think she did him good. He was going home to England with the frightfully vindictive design of avenging himself on an inappreciative world by publishing his poems: it is my belief that most of the MSS. was turned into cigar-lights before the *Mighty Metropolis* sighted Kinsale.

Then there was Leary. Leary certainly was smitten, but he was not the man to admit it. As self-appointed M.C., and as editor of the *Metropolitan*, Leary considered himself the most important man on board. He thought nothing of the captain, whom indeed he would as willingly have superseded as Lord Russell would take the command of the Channel Fleet. He rather wished for a hurricane and a shipwreck, that he might show his presence of mind and power of command. Leary would have got on better with the queen of the quarterdeck if he had been rather less boisterous, and rather apter to wash his hands.

Poor inoffensive and inefficient Jack Manly must by no means be forgotten. Miranda struck him dumb at first sight, and he barely recovered his speech through all the voyage. He was going back to a stern father, in the guise of a penitent prodigal son; so he had not courage enough to fall in love.

As to Harry Loraine, I think he would have taken a header into the depths of the erotic ocean, had he not seen that Tom Jones was thoroughly in love—had he not also fancied that Miss Miranda was rather taken with Tom Jones. Loraine was emphatically an unmarriageable man: he hated the idea of losing his independence; he liked Bohemian bachelorism. Miranda was absolutely the first woman who had made him ask himself the question whether the game of marriage was worth the candle. Her pretty piquant unsophisticated style delighted him as much as her amazing Venetian beauty; but then he thought of the quiet Albany, the isolated existence of a man without claims or responsibilities, the perfect ease and independence of his unfettered life. "One might have children," thought Loraine. "Fancy, how dreadful!"

However, he joined Miranda's other admirers, and the court she held astern was always lively. It was a trifle exclusive: most of the other saloon passengers were fortunate adventurers, who had made money rapidly, and were going to England to spend it. Still it was not so exclusive as the Wilson society, which was as fashionably select as Almack's when they blackballed Duchesses.

On the 30th of May the *Mighty Metropolis* came in sight of the rocky island of Diego Ramirez, between fifty and sixty miles from Cape Horn. It was growing cold, for the ship was about fifteen degrees from the antarctic circle; and Miranda was wrapt up in furs and tiger-skins, which her father had providently purchased for her. The weather, hitherto exquisitely calm, had become boisterous; severe storms of hail had once or twice cleared the decks; and the cold night winds had made the fast young gentlemen who liked to prowl the deck in the short hours, extremely glad to seek their berths at a reasonable time. Many a wide-winged albatross followed the great ship on its way, as if for company; and as she rounded

the Horn, the stormy petrels—Mother Carey's chickens—were seen lovingly playing with the crests of the waves.

Still our pleasant little parliament of wit and flirtation, guided by the trium-feminate, held its sittings regularly. The albatross gave the poet Cincinnatus an opportunity of reciting long screeds from Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner," much to the delight of his audience. But Loraine worried him with parody, exclaiming—

"I say with scorn, as we round the Horn,
And to the Atlantic cross,
Bring close to my hand the cruet-stand,
And we'll devil an albatross.

"He'll be fishy and tough, I've often heard,
But still we'll have our revel:
Why shouldn't we devil a fishy bird,
When a fishy bard's the devil?"

Such was the nonsense that amused our party while the *Mighty Metropolis* made magnificent way through the waters, sometimes under canvas, sometimes under steam, but always seeming to subjugate ocean with a splendid mastery. Heartily did Miranda enjoy her voyage: she was an Undine, and the ocean was her birthplace, and the restless

waves seemed to be her friends. As she watched them fretting into foam against the great steamship's side, she seemed as if she were at home. Her mother had found her tomb in the infinite bosom of ocean. Perhaps, thought the imaginative girl, she had come to life again there; had been nurtured and tended by the gods of the sea; was even now dwelling in some crystal city where mighty groves of seaweed surrounded palaces built of coral red as blood. In those immeasurable depths dwell strange creatures. When the kraken rises to the surface, men think it an island, and the coils of the great sea-serpent are leagues in length. Surely those mighty stretches of submarine land may have inhabitants. So speculated our Undine as she watched the wandering water from the stately ship: of physical difficulties her instinctive philosophy made nothing—rightly, since to the Creator there are no physical difficulties.

Tom Jones got more and more in love with Miranda every day; but she maddened that impetuous hero of ours by treating him in a quiet confiding sisterly fashion. She

flirted with the captain; she laughed merrily at Meunier's poetry and Leary's rhodomontade; she patronised Jack Manly; she coquetted with Loraine in the most outrageous manner, and he was always lying at her feet on deck, and playing the part of Mercutio in love. But to Tom Jones she was always frank and sisterly and easy.

"She'll never care a bit for me," soliloquised that young gentleman. "I'm too old—I'm too stupid. Those fellows, with their chaff and their poetry, take all the wind out of my sails. Confound it! If I were ashore, I might tear myself away from her; but I can't well jump overboard and swim to Patagonia. No; I'll marry that child whatever happens. By Jove! I wonder whether we could get married on board? There's the parson coming up the companion; I'll ask him. No, I won't; he'll think I'm cracked: besides, I'd better ask Miranda first. Faith, I'll smoke a pipe, and consider the question. Miranda! Lovely name,—but not half so lovely as she is."

Tom Jones, having smoked his pipe, went below in search of champagne.

CHAPTER VII.

CROSSING THE LINE.

"Oh! the oak and the ash and the bonny ivy tree,
They flourish best of all in the North Countrie."

"WE shall cross the line about four this afternoon," said Captain Grainger, on the 20th of June, to his passengers; "and please don't give any of the seamen anything to drink, for they always get as much as is good for them."

"I suppose we may have a glass of champagne ourselves," said Harold Tachbrook, "eh, Captain? Only it will make your thirsty sailors thirstier still if they see us at it. When, in my boyhood, I studied geography, those wonderful lines on the maps always used to puzzle me; and the equator especially was a mystery. I wondered how ships could get over it."

"I think we shall manage that part of the business," said the captain. "I have passed the line a good many times, and never saw it yet."

"Well, then, we'll have the champagne," said Tachbrook, laughing. "We'll drink to such of our old friends in England as are likely to remember us. Tom, my boy, go and make the steward send me up some of the right stuff, and plenty of ice. I know there's some ice left, and one can't do without it under the line."

"Let me share in the festive entertainment," said Neoptolemus Wilson, who had joined the group.

"Thanks," said Harold, "but I am President of Ecuador on this occasion."

"I can't drink to any old friends in England, papa," said Miranda. "My childish acquaintances are all sharks and whales and sea-serpents and stormy petrels. 'Health and long life to the great sea-serpent!' will be my toast."

Afternoon came, and the Captain caused the moment of crossing the equator to be notified by a discharge of half-a-dozen small brass

cannon—dogs that could bark, but that could not bite very hard. And then our friends enjoyed their champagne—half-a-dozen bottles decanted at once in a mighty gold jug, embossed all over with figures of flying nymphs and pursuing deities, which the Captain had found in his early days among a heap of other antique rarities that had belonged to buccaneers.

"This is a grand jug," quoth the poet Cincinnatus, "heavy to lift and hard to drain. Tell us all about your finding it, Captain; it will be a capital yarn for the equator."

"I've got the story in verse somewhere," said Grainger, "done years ago by a friend of mine, who thought himself a poet, and was wrong. If I can find it, will anybody read it?"

Leary, of course, offered at once, and the Captain went to find the MS. It was on very yellow paper, and in the crabbedest of writing; but Leary dauntlessly undertook his task.

So, as the great gold cup went round, while the steamship clove its way through the turbid current that discoloured the sea from the

mouths of the mighty Amazon, eloquent Leary rose and read—

"It was only a merry corvette that rode the South Pacific sea;
But the man who held that craft in hand was brave Lieutenant Lee.
And when he was told of slaves and gold in Arequipa Bay,
And when there came a spy of fame to show the difficult way,
'I'll hang those rascally buccaneers by their ugly necks,' said he.

"O how soft was the summer air when the little *Firefly* crept
Under the low green woodland shores where the villanous pirates slept,
Under the heavy fringes of foliage, fruit, and flower,
Where safe, as they deemed, the scoundrels enjoyed their holiday hour;
And they drank good wine from stolen cups, and their luckless captives wept.

"In she paddled—the *Firefly*. The channel was hard to find;
As if to the heart of a forest it seemed to wind and wind;
But right was the guide; he knew the tide; he had been there a slave:
He longed to see the pirates in conquered agony rave—
Came the delight that very night for which he had prayed and pined.

"Quietly lay the *Firefly* under the great trees, where
Never the water rippled, nor soft winds stirred the air;
Never a whisper we uttered, but watched them, lazy as swine,
Swinging in easy hammocks, while white girls served them wine.
'Tis your very last day,' said Lee to himself; 'drink on, and never spare.'

"Ay! we could hear their ribald songs as the sudden evening fell,
And their bestial jests, that well might shame the lowest fiends of hell;
And sobs we heard, and screams and shouts, and a roar of impious song;
And we longed with cutlass to strike down the cowardly scoundrel throng,
But Lee lay close, for he knew his game, and meant to play it well.

"Yes, well it was played: we made our raid when the fools with wine were gay;
They were five to one, but the thing was done in swift and sudden way.
The cutlass bright did work that night, and a horde of rascals killed;
But we managed to save the chief, a knave of huge and hideous build;
He was hung in his gorgeous gems and gold at the yard-arm next day.

"Plenty of plunder was there in that base pirate hold;
They had ransacked churches and houses, and taken jewels and gold.
They had taken beautiful girls, too; we could but bring them back
To the homes whence they were stolen in midnights wild and black;
But ah! they might never know again the happy days of old.

"This mighty cup was part of my share: when from its golden brim
The red wine flows, my eyesight grows with tears of memory dim;
Since I know with pain that never again I shall sail the Southern Seas— [these;
Never again shall scour the main for scoundrels such as
Never again my steel shall cleave a pirate limb from limb."

"A capital ballad," said Stuart. "Did it really happen, Captain? I'd like to have been with you."

"Yes, it happened," said Grainger. "It was the fastest thing I ever saw. Our men had been lying under the shore in grim silence, like chained mastiffs, watching these beggarly thieves, who were drinking and swearing and making the poor unfortunate girls wait upon them. Now there 's nothing a sailor hates so much as seeing a woman abused; so when the time came at last, and the boats with muffled oars landed us on the other side, we were all mad to get at them."

"And you hanged their leader?" said Tachbrook.

"Yes; I shall never forget the fellow. He was immensely tall, and so dark that he must have had nigger blood in him. There were great rings of gold in his ears, which flapped down like an elephant's; and round his great dusky throat he wore a big band of precious stones of a dozen sorts, worth no end of money. He was lying on a kind of rough sofa, half asleep. One girl was fanning him; another was standing with a goblet of wine in her

hand, ready if he wanted. Lee had heard of the fellow from our spy, who had been captured by him, and had escaped with great ingenuity; and he was resolved to make an example of him. So he and I and another made straight to the ruffian, and slipped a cord round his arms and another round his throat, and tied him down securely. Then we went in for a general fight: it was soon over, and of about fifty of the villains, we cut down all but five. We hardly got a scratch."

"And Lieutenant Lee hanged them?" said Loraine.

"He did. He wasn't reprimanded by the Admiralty for inhumanity, as, of course, he would be in these days. He had the pirate captain well flogged first, in the presence of his men, and then he made short work with them. The delight of the poor girls that they had carried off was something to remember. They showed us where the pirates kept their treasures, and we soon cleared it out. It was the first good fight I ever saw."

"How old were you, Captain?" asked Miranda.

"About seventeen, Miss Tachbrook. If I

had met you then, I should have been in love with you directly."

"O, I have no doubt you were precocious," she said; "but have you no more adventures to tell?"

"It is somebody else's turn now. Come, Captain Stuart," he said, "pass the mug this way and spin us a yarn."

"I've nothing in the way of a trophy like your huge vessel of gold," said Stuart, passing it to Grainger, "but I've rather a curiosity here, which I got in a curious way."

He took from his watch chain a small article which he handed to Grainger, who passed it on to Miranda, as lady president of the assembly. It was a perfect icosahedron of crystal, marvellously cut, in the centre of which was a small sphere, the size of a pea, of radiant ruby. It passed round the group.

"That looks as if it ought to have a history," said Loraine. "Let us hear it."

"I had it from a dervish at Bokhara," said Stuart. "I met him on the Lebi Hanz Divanbeghi, and, as he looked awfully miserable, took him to a tea-booth and gave him some tea, which he flavoured with lard and salt."

"O, was it nice?" asked Amy Mansard.

"I didn't try it. It failed to cheer up my pious friend, so I gave him some Scotch whisky from a pocket-flask, and he rapidly improved. We sat down under one of the great elms by the reservoir, and he told me his troubles. He had inherited this talisman, which he showed: the round stone in the centre was then perfectly white, like a diamond. He told me that he had inherited this curiosity; that the natural colour of the centre was red; that if any piece of good fortune was coming to the owner, it would turn blue; if of ill fortune, black; while if he were going to die, it would become white. 'You see,' he said, 'it is white; I shall die before sunset.' I laughed at his superstition, and tried to cheer him with more whisky. Whether it was too much for him I don't know, but he suddenly sprang up, threw the talisman into my lap, and rushed frantically through the excited crowd that always covers the Hanz. I did my best to follow him; but there is no moving fast in Bokhara, and one dervish is so like another, that twenty times I thought I had found him, but was wrong. So I was

obliged to keep the stone. It was red, as you see it now, when I looked at it next morning."

"Has it changed since?" asked Loraine.

"Not once; and I have had no particular luck, good or ill."

Many another yarn was spun as the ship flew northwards fourteen knots an hour, and the Captain's great gold jug circulated at about the same pace. It was, as Tachbrook remarked, an apt illustration of the duplex motion which one finds in the planetary bodies. But the dinner-gong sounded at last, and Captain Grainger took his place at the head of the table; and later in the evening there was a dance upon deck in the light of the full moon, for there was a capital band on board.

The state-cabins of the *Mighty Metropolis* were unusually commodious; and when Harold Tachbrook took his passage, he was lucky enough to get a group of three with an anteroom, which formed a pleasant lounging place for the trio the last thing at night. This evening they sat half-an-hour, Tachbrook and Tom Jones, smoking cigarettes,

which Miranda deftly rolled for them. Tom was very quiet; he had been for the last few days. There were two things on his mind, and every day nearer home made their burden feel heavier. So Miranda and her father had most of the talk to themselves.

"Now you're in north latitude, child," he said, "for the first time in your life. Do you sniff your natural air? Do you pine for the land of oak, ash, and ivy? Are you in a hurry to see your grandfather?"

"Yes," she replied, "I am impatient; and yet—well I don't know, this life is so pleasant and amusing. I like the people on board—most of them. I like the lazy existence, while there is all the time a feeling that you are travelling tremendously fast without trouble to yourself. I think I should like to always make voyages in a big ship with pleasant company and pleasant weather."

"How would it be," said her father, "to have a private planet of your own, and go wandering all over the universe?"

"O, the idea is too vast. Perhaps it might suit me in my next state of existence."

Tom Jones smoked silently, watching the play of her mobile features, and thinking that he most certainly would like the voyage to last for ever.

"Do you think all those delightful stories were true, papa, that we heard to-day?"

"Grainger's was true enough, I don't doubt; but I wouldn't answer for any of the others. I don't think Loraine ever saw a ghost in the Albany; and I question the probability of Cincinnatus's lady whom he saw drowned in California and afterwards met alive in England."

"And Captain Stuart's talisman, papa?"

"Stuart is a humbug!" growled Tom Jones —his first contribution to the colloquy.

"Well, I think he is, rather," rejoined Tachbrook. "Still, I may perhaps believe in his talisman when I see it work."

"I'll be hanged if I would," said Jones.

"O you are cross, Tom," said Miranda. "You have an evil demon in you, like poor King Saul, who I have always thought was abominably treated. Come, shall I exorcise the fiend with a song?"

Tom's eyes brightened as he said "Yes."

But then, again, he thought to himself that this frank and easy kindness was nothing but sisterly affection.

Miranda found her guitar, and sang—

"Summer is here on the sea,
And the white foam flashes free
Around our ship all day.
We live in a pleasant dream,
While the infinite waters gleam,
And the swift leagues speed away—
No storm, no stay.

"Ah! could it ever be so!
Could the magical moments flow
Under serenest skies!
Could life be always youth,
And love be beauty and truth!
Ah! that is no mortal prize—
Life flies, love dies."

"After that we'll all go to bed," quoth Harold. "Come, Miranda, give Tom a kiss to cheer him up."

She obeyed, and Tom dreamt of it.

CHAPTER VIII.

TORRICELLI'S TUBE.

"With lens of glass did Galileo probe
The secrets of the spheres; with tube of glass,
Wherein the liquid metal fluctuates free,
His famous pupil taught us how to search
The lair of storms."

For many days the great steamship passed pleasantly on its course, and there were agreeable instances among the parties in the sternsheets of that scientific flirtation which has been described as attention without intention. For many days the history of the voyage was eventless; and surely of a ship, as of a nation, it may be said that it is happy to be without a history. The only discontented voyager seemed to be Tom Jones—Jones of the two troubles. One we know;

the other we shall know in time. That known trouble was his love for Miranda, and his heavy fear that she regarded him solely as a kind of elder brother. She never flirted with him, as she did with Stuart and Loraine, and the poet, and even Jack Manly. She treated him with perfect simplicity and confidence. Eighteen years in the bush had left him a boy of fourteen still in ignorance of the ways of young ladies; for when he left England, the question of sex, as Arthur Clough called it, had never disturbed him. He could play cricket and football; he could knock down his schoolmaster, and run away in search of freedom; but he looked on a young person in petticoats as an entirely inferior animal, not worth a moment's consideration. This is very much the way with boys not too precocious, and it is much the healthier form of development. The boy who begins too early in erotics should be treated as Florio was treated when Biancafiore fascinated him —whereof Boccaccio hath written in very choice Italian. That which is strongest is slowest of growth. A gourd may run up in a night, to oblige a minor prophet: the

oak wants his centuries, and waxes strong by battle with the storms.

One evening early in July, Captain Grainger went below to register his barometrical observations and consult his chart. The ship was in about 37° N. latitude and 30° W. longitude. The Captain was pleased with his passage and his passengers; there was not a cloud in the sky as large as a man's hand. "All went merry as a marriage-bell." However, as some Frenchman has somewhere said, nothing is certain but the unforeseen. When Captain Grainger looked at his glass, he, a man usually imperturbable, started suddenly back. It had fallen since morning from 30.7 inches to 29.3, and the summit of the mercurial column was concave. Grainger, after meditating half a minute, went rapidly on deck, and said a few words to his chief officer, the result of which was that the great ship took in all sail, and used her screw all the night.

Although it was late, a few passengers were strolling on deck to enjoy the moonlight; one of these was Captain Stuart, whose quick ear caught sufficient of Grainger's communi-

cation to his subordinate to make him guess there was something up. He rejoiced, for he loved adventure. He thought he should like to be shipwrecked on a desert island, with nobody but Miranda.

When the Captain had made his arrangements for the night, which he decided to pass on deck, he went down to the antechamber of Tachbrook's cabin, where he often looked in for a few minutes for a final gossip. Our friends were there, enjoying the coolness of the evening, for the ship was marvellously well built for abundant access of air. Miranda, who was very keen-sighted, noted at once that the Captain seemed absent and thoughtful.

"You don't look well, Captain Grainger," she said; "I will be your doctor, and prescribe a cooling draught."

"Thanks," he said; "I will take a glass of Mr Tachbrook's favourite mixture, hock and seltzer. I must be moderate, for I have to keep watch to-night."

"Why so?"

"The mercury is going down. That, indeed, is what brought me here. I am afraid

of rather a gale, and want you, without frightening the ladies, to keep them below to-morrow."

"We'll look after them to-night," cried Tom Jones, whose excitable temper made him almost long for a hurricane. "It would be absurd to turn in. Tachbrook, let's go on deck; if anything happens, we can help the women folk."

"I agree with you," said Harold. "What will you do, Miranda?"

"Go on deck with you, papa. If I get tired, I can lie down in my berth just as I am, to be ready for all emergencies. It would be so very chilly to be drowned in one's night-dress."

"And might shock the Nereids," said her father—"Ianassa and Kallianassa, and their forty-eight sisters. Well, Captain, with your permission, we'll all three go on deck, and be ready to take orders from you at any moment. My little Miranda can manage the ladies. She is not easily daunted; she was born at sea, you know, Captain."

"Was she?" he exclaimed. "Then we are all safe. No ship was ever hopelessly

wrecked with a passenger on board that was born at sea."

Tachbrook did not smile at the Captain's superstition. Superstition is a necessity of lonely life.

The sea was calm. Nothing moved it except the mighty screw, which left a trail of foam that sparkled strangely in the moonlight. The sky had no cloud. The idea of peril could not have entered the most experienced seaman's brain, but for that magic tube of Torricelli.

Swift moved the ship, but slowly passed the night. The Captain at frequent intervals went to consult his barometer. Slowly it sank. It was at 28.9 at sunrise when the Farworker arose in his glory of purple and saffron, and sent long interminable shafts of light across the fire-flushed levels of the sea.

"It will be a long time coming, and will last long," said the Captain in a whisper to Tachbrook. "Say nothing to any one, but keep your eye on the ladies, so as to get them below in a minute or two if the gale begins. We are just off the Azores—and when it blows there, it *does* blow. Sometimes the

storms force islands up from below; there is one there that came up about 1810 or 1812."

"I shall give Miranda some breakfast," said Harold, "and make her lie down for a few hours, and do the same myself. Then we shall be all right for what may happen. Send if you want us, Captain. Tom, you must do likewise."

About six o'clock they turned in; at ten, after sound sleep and refreshing baths, they were perfectly fresh and ready for the events of the day. They found breakfast in progress in the saloon, and the magnificent Wilson lecturing on colonial politics to the small clique that professed to admire him. Tackbrook, who was on as good terms with the cook as with the Captain, got a capital omelet made. After that, and a cup of good coffee, slightly dashed with cognac, they felt ready for the day

Captain Grainger paced the deck uneasily. At noon the mercury had dropped a quarter of an inch. The majority of the passengers were wisely kept ignorant of the situation; they enjoyed themselves in the sternsheets as usual; but Captain Stuart ostentatiously

exhibited his crystal icosahedron, the centre of which had turned jet black. The ladies to whom he exhibited it were all terrified, and thought something dreadful was going to happen. Stuart was happy; he had created a sensation.

Loraine took the trinket from the hands of Alice Mansard, who had been examining it in a half-frightened way. He touched a spring, and then handed it to Stuart—with the centre white!

"You are doomed to drowning, I fear," said Loraine, sympathisingly.

Stuart looked puzzled, then got up and walked forward. Miranda said to Loraine—

"What does it mean?"

"Those toys are all over Asia," he said. "I've a couple of them somewhere, but I think it's in London. You turn the handle till it comes the colour you want. Our friend Stuart wanted to hoax you."

"What a shame!" exclaimed Miranda.

"Dreadful! Send him to Coventry, without a return-ticket. By the way, I hope he won't drown himself to prove the truth of his talisman."

"Pooh!" quoth Tom Jones, "that's not his destiny."

The day continued calm, but still the column of mercury sank, sank, sank, and with it sank Captain Grainger's heart. Everybody on deck was gay enough. The only three of the party to whom the Captain had spoken were of daring temperament, and easily kept up their spirits, sanguine of good luck in any peril. Dinner went gaily. There was a dance on deck afterwards. Amid all the music and gaiety Grainger perpetually consulted his barometer. At sunset it stood 28.8, yet the sky was clear.

At ten o'clock most of the ladies had gone below. The only one left, indeed, was Miranda, who, leaning on her father's arm, in a state of intense expectation, searched the sky with those clear eyes of hers. Suddenly, in the dim cobalt eastern sky, she saw a small grey cloud, and pointed it out to the Captain.

"It is coming," he said, hoarsely. "Go below, for God's sake." And then he gave swift orders to the crew.

They were hardly under hatches when the gale struck the great ship like a thunderbolt, and she staggered into the trough of the sea.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ISLAND OF HAWKS.

"Whence came that marvellous sudden shaft
Which cut us down on our path, while we,
With singing shrouds, through a summer sea
Swept, and the sweet waves softly laughed?"

CAPTAIN GRAINGER felt that he could fight any common storm, but this strong rush of tempest was irresistible. It took the great ship as if it had been a feather, and drove it between air and sea with swiftness unimaginable. The engines were paralysed; the masts went by the boards; Grainger, clinging to the ungovernable helm, said, "We are in God's hands!" and waited the event with courage and patience indomitable.

Quickly did the unfortunate passengers below discover that something terrible was

happening. Tachbrook and Tom Jones tore up some blankets, and fastened Miranda to a stationary couch, so that she might not be shattered to fragments by the furious movement of the vessel. They could not get from their cabins to aid any one else, for it was impossible to stand upright for an instant, so fiercely was the ship clutched and whirled by the cyclone. They held on to the couch where Miranda lay, and resolutely awaited certain destruction. Of such moments, however brief, there is no description; and when sensations of this sort last, ordinary humanity becomes torpid with terror.

It was not so with our friends. How long the ship was driven before the gale they did not know, but they managed to say a good many things to each other before the final catastrophe arrived. The roar of the wind was a strong continuous sound, but did not prevent their voices being heard by each other.

"The ship *must* be lost," said Tom Jones. "I wish I were on deck; I hate being drowned in a hole."

"You won't be drowned," said Miranda; "I was born at sea, you know."

"We had better look forward to death, my child," said Harold Tachbrook, quietly; "it is the inevitable fate of us all; and where it happens, or how, is of slight consequence—we are in God's hands."

He was unconsciously echoing Grainger's exclamation when the wild gale broke loose. It is what men most callous and impious are forced to exclaim when they are powerless amid peril.

"Yes!" cried Tom Jones, "that is true; and now that we are doomed to die together, let me tell you something, Miranda—let me tell you something, Tachbrook: I am"——

At that instant a mighty shock threw both Harold and Tom from their position, and almost shook Miranda's couch from its strongly-fixed foundation; then there was quiet. The wind yelled at the sea, and the sea howled like a scourged slave, but the ship was still.

"We have struck," said Tachbrook, "thank God!"

They unswathed Miranda from her blankets, and she stood up gay and brave as a daughter of Nereus. It was easy to stand now: the

ship did not tremble, though the storm still shrieked like a myriad million of fiends.

"You see my being born at sea has been of some use, papa," said Miranda.

"Immense, child," said her father; "I shall try and get on deck. Tom will take care of you till I return."

Getting on deck was not easy, for the ship was a chaos. Tachbrook struggled to the surface in time, and found that although the gale still blew, it had driven the ship into so sheltered a corner that it was just possible to stand on deck without being blown overboard. Stem on, the *Mighty Metropolis* had been driven between two lofty ridges of basaltic rock, just wide enough to clench her; there she lay, while the wind roared over her, fixed as if in a vice. The cliffs were lofty; it was impossible to see what was beyond; to Tachbrook it seemed that the best thing he could do was to search for Grainger. He found him holding on to the helm, almost faint with what he had endured. He made the Captain take a little brandy, after which he soon recovered his faculties. Meanwhile the gale was blowing itself out; by the time

Tachbrook had medicated the Captain, there was hardly a puff of wind, and the sun shone brightly on the maddened waters. The passionate wind soon forgets its rage, and gives zephyr-kisses to the sea ten minutes after, but the sullen sea groans and swells and surges for days after the wind's passion.

Miranda, during her father's absence, had been changing her dress, and came on deck quite a gay little figure, uncrumpled by the storm. The others, as they came up one by one looked each more tattered and disarranged than the last. So they served as foils to Miranda. They were a very different party from those whom we have seen enjoying champagne from the Captain's famous gold cup.

When Captain Grainger made his examination, it was found that there were few casualties during the storm; which shows that when seamen (or any other men) have a dangerous thing to do, they do it well. There was nobody missing except Captain Stuart, and he would be sure to turn up.

Grainger soon had his crew at work to see what could be done. It was evident almost

at once that they must let down boats and get ashore. The Captain feared the return of the gale, since so long an atmospheric premonition clearly indicated a series of storms, worse perhaps than this wild hurricane. Then perchance the power that had fixed his steamer between the rocks might drag her out again, and shatter her to pieces. So he set all hands at work, and the passengers were landed on a beach of firm yellow sand that lay south of the rocks; and some sat upon cushions and rugs, and refreshed themselves, and wrung their hands and moaned; while others, enterprising as Gulliver or Crusoe, determined to explore. Loraine, Jack Manly, Leary, the poet Cincinnatus joined our party; and they turned their backs to the sea, and went bravely inland.

"O how delightful!" was Miranda's exclamation before they had walked a hundred yards. They were in a wood of orange and lemon trees, with innumerable fruitage upon the boughs. The oranges were small and sweet, the lemons large and fragrant. Through this wood of glossy leaf and exquisite odour they walked for about half a mile. Then

they came to what seemed a half-wild vineyard, the grapes ripening rapidly, while here and there stood a group of banana-trees. Through this vineyard sparkled a crystal stream. On they went, not despising a few grapes where the clusters were ripest, and reached an eminent point, whence they could see the ocean on the other side, and many islands of various sizes sleeping in the sunshine. It was a lovely view, both by sea and on shore. The air was laden with the luscious aroma of lemon and citron, coffee and cinnamon, all growing half-wild everywhere. Human habitation saw they none. The sea shone like an oriental sapphire. The blue peaks of the archipelago cut the air like cones of steel. Everywhere reigned beauty and fertility, but everywhere also reigned solitude. Stay! There were goats innumerable capering about the ravines; and there hovered in æther multitudinous falcons: the *açores*, which gave their name to the whole group of islands.

"What a lovely spot!" suddenly exclaimed Miranda. They were on the verge of a gentle grassy slope, which formed a complete

amphitheatre. Miranda rested on a block of lava that seemed moulded for a seat, and her bodyguard threw themselves on the virgin turf. The bright rivulet from the vineyard became a musical torrent here, throwing itself over a bed of tufa, and rushing wildly into a calm oval lake that lay in the valley below. This lake was a perfect ellipse. Very pure and tranquil it lay, except where the headlong brook disturbed its waters. Harry Loraine, the completest of men as regards the practical apparatus of travel, had not allowed his field-glass to be smashed in the shipwreck, and it hung across his shoulder in its russia-leather case. He was adjusting it to sweep the opposite shore of the lake, when Tom Jones, whose Australian experience from boyhood had made him strong of sight, exclaimed—

"There's something in the cliffs there that looks very like the mouth of a cavern. Examine it, Loraine."

He turned his glass that way; then, after taking a good look, passed it to Tachbrook.

"Certainly a cavern," said the latter, "and

with marks of human artifice about the portal. Perhaps the inhabitants of this islet are troglodytes."

"What *is* that, papa?" asked Miranda.

"Greek, child. 'Troglodyte' means a dweller in a cave, like some of the Nottingham people. They used to do it in Æthiopia, according to Herodotus. Shall we go round the lake and investigate?"

"Of course!" exclaimed the poet Meunier. "Perhaps we shall find an underground kingdom, where everything is reversed—where people are born old and go back to youth—where ice is hot and fire cold."

"Where poets are fools," interrupted Loraine.

"What in the world is that?" exclaimed Miranda, pointing to the lake, a few yards from the other side. "There is something moving in the water."

"Big fish," said Leary.

Loraine looked at the moving objects through his field-glass.

"If it were not impossible," he said, "I should think they were a couple of children swimming. Try your eyesight, Tachbrook."

"By Jove, you're right," he exclaimed; "a couple of amphibious young troglodytes. Well, there *are* inhabitants, after all; I suppose they'll talk nothing but Portuguese."

"There's a Portuguese sailor on board," said Jack Manly. "He'll be able to interpret."

The party made their way down the steep grassy sward, and were soon on the lake's margin. They skirted it on a hard beach of lava mixed with strange sea-shells. All the Azores are volcanic in origin. Doubtless this lake was the crater of a submarine volcano, lifted to the surface suddenly. When they came near the point at which their strange fish had been swimming, it was apparent that they had just landed. A couple of beautiful children, nine or ten years old, were racing up and down on a stretch of turf, drying themselves in the sunshine. They had no towel, and apparently no raiment. When they saw the travellers approach, they came running up to them, exclaiming—

"Hurrah! hurrah!"

"I wonder what that's Portuguese for," said Loraine. "It sounds ridiculouslylike English."

The two children, down whose white skins the spherules still trickled, shook their abundant wet hair, and danced gaily, and played all sorts of wild tricks upon the grass.

"They are wild creatures," said Tachbrook; "but they seem English in look and language. Let us question them."

Tom Jones sprang forward and caught hold of the boy. The youngster was not in the least alarmed. He clomb up his stalwart captor's form, and seated himself on his shoulder.

"Now," he said, in excellent good English, "what do you want?"

"You've got caught by the young Man of the Sea," said Leary to Tom Jones.

"Where do you live?" asked Tachbrook.

"In the cave there," he said, pointing to the arched entrance they had seen from the other side of the lake. It was a noble natural archway. "Come and see father," the boy went on; while the girl, a wild creature, ran forward over the grass.

When they approached the entrance to the cave they heard a mighty roar of water, and at the giant doorway they found a deep

chasm, ten feet wide perhaps, and of depth unguessable, far down in which the waters of the lake were evidently discharged by a subterranean river. Across this gulf there was a cord stretched tight: the girl walked on it to the other side with perfect ease.

"Let me go and find father," cried the boy, and sprang from Tom Jones's shoulder, and crossed in like manner.

Our exploring party stood in amazement. These inhabitants of an unknown island, wild as savages yet speaking English, perplexed them greatly. They stood on the brink of this wonderful abyss, and waited to see what would happen. Presently there appeared in the entry a tall figure with hair and beard perfectly white. He was apparently about six feet high. He had on a tunic of goat's skins, and short trews of the same material reaching to the knees. Below, his legs and feet were bare.

"Friends?" he cried interrogatively; and on receiving an affirmative answer, he let down a rough plank that just crossed the chasm. For some curious reason connected with the human imagination, walking a plank

a foot wide is easy enough if you put it on firm ground, but makes you dizzy if there is space below. It is noticeable that monkeys do not feel this difficulty—a fact hard to reconcile with Darwinism.

However, Tom Jones crossed easily enough, and standing midway, offered his hand to Miranda, and landed her safely. Cincinnatus the poet, having ascended Mount Tyndall in the Sierra Nevada, had no difficulty. Tachbrook disdained the plank and leaped the chasm. Leary and Manly and Loraine had some slight hesitations. When they were across, the scene was superb. The entrance-hall of this great cavern, or series of caverns, was about three hundred feet from floor to roof, and instead of being dark, as they anticipated, was suffused with a tender light. For high in the mountain peak there was a natural skylight, catching the meridian sun—and half way up the wall of the cavern was a noble window, of whose form a Gothic architect might be proud, through which poured the western sunset.

"This is a palace for a King of the Sea," said Cincinnatus Meunier.

CHAPTER X.

THE BIG SHIP.

"Nequicquam Deus abscidit
Prudens Oceano dissociabili
Terras, si tamen impiae
Non tangenda rates transiliunt vada."

WHILE our exploring party were cheerily seeking adventure, and realising Mr Disraeli's favourite apophthegm, that "adventures are to the adventurous," Captain Grainger was doing his duty, not without considerable trouble. He had to provide sustenance for crew and passengers, to keep the former in order, to console the latter. Can you not imagine Mr Edward Wilson, knight *in futuro*, pompously delivering himself?

"I am very much annoyed, Captain Grainger; we are all very much annoyed. I

was to have been presented to Her Most Gracious Majesty early in August, and to have received the honour of knighthood; and here we all are on a desert island—most inconvenient for Lady—I mean Mrs Wilson and the Misses Wilson—and it is impossible to say when she shall reach England. You know, sir, it is not pleasant to disappoint the Queen!"

Grainger, with less troubles on his broad shoulders, would probably have laughed. As it was, he simply said, with the uttermost gravity—

"You may thank God, Mr Wilson, that you have disappointed the sharks."

The *Mighty Metropolis*, jammed by the gale between two rocks, moved not perceptibly either with wind or tide. She lay high out of the water, and her stern sank a little at first, but now she was stedfast; and Grainger said to himself that it would take a fleet of steamers to haul her off. She was safe enough—only too safe. Nothing less than as strong a gale from the opposite quarter could drive her back into the sea. So the captain's first business was to land provisions and

articles of comfort—canvas for tents, and mattresses for sleeping. All hands worked hard at this business, and the afternoon saw the beach a complete encampment, and cookery going on over many fires, and everybody willing to look cheerfully at the situation. Except Mr Edward Wilson, who strutted up and down like an injured turkey-cock, pining for his accolade.

One of the Captain's most efficient helpers was the surgeon, Mr Brett; and one of the surgeon's earliest proceedings was to go to the snug little corner known as the surgery, in order to collect necessary medicines. A very small den was the surgery, opening from the surgeon's private cabin, fitted up with cases and chests for various kinds of drugs, and with no furniture except a heavy sofa, designed to serve as a basis of operation in case anybody wanted a tooth extracted, or anything worse. When Brett entered this snuggery, he was amazed to see a man apparently asleep on the sofa. It was Captain Stuart. He lay prone, with a phial clutched in his left hand. The Doctor looked at the phial, and felt the Captain's pulse—and came to a

rapid conclusion, which turned out to be correct.

When the gale struck the ship with such awful suddenness, Stuart was below in the saloon. He made a rush toward his own cabin, but was unable to reach it. He fell through a door, and found himself in the surgery. He held on to the sofa, white with terror; he heard the mad conflict of wind with sea, and felt the great ship trembling in every plank as she was driven through the water. Stuart, a man of no faith, and not much reason, was disgusted with his situation. He remembered how, when he went out rabbiting in his boyhood, he pitied the poor devil of a rabbit, caught in his hole, the ferret behind him, and the terrier waiting at the mouth.

"I 'm in a hole now, by Jove," said Stuart to himself, "and there 's no getting out of it. No ship can live in this gale. We shall all go down; and where the deuce shall we find ourselves? I wish it was over."

Stuart was not a coward. In active daring he had few equals; but he had no power of passive endurance. Each moment made him

more madly impatient. All at once a sudden idea occurred to him; he managed to stretch over to one of the medicine cases, and to find a phial of chloroform. He emptied the whole of it on his handkerchief, buried his nostrils and mouth therein, and in two minutes was dreamlessly asleep, and quite unconscious of the steamship and the gale.

Still asleep was Stuart when Brett found him. The surgeon asked the Captain to come and look at him; and Grainger ordered some sailors to get him into a boat on a mattress, and land him at a quiet spot on the beach, away from the rest of the party. So he was laid on his mattress in a niche of the rocks, whence he could see nothing but sea and sky.

When he awoke, he was alone, for Brett and the sailors had plenty to do. Where was he? He felt weak and headachy, and reasoned that such feelings could hardly occur in any world except the earth. Yet he was not on board ship, at any rate; and for aught he knew, he might be in some easy avenue to the nether world, awaiting a summons to the presence of that monarch whom no man, save Cuvier, has ever foiled.

Weakened by fatigue and chloroform, he lay in a dozy lotophagous state, and watched the sky and sea. The calm was perfect. Stuart's brain worked mechanically, and he imagined a host of things which seemed absolutely real. He was in that state which opium confers when not used in excess—a state which the Turk calls *kef*.

Brett, having a thousand things to do, left Stuart alone for some hours: when he came to look after him, he found he was in a dreamy half-conscious state; he administered a little brandy. Stuart gulped it; looked round; recognised Brett; exclaimed—

"I thought I was in heaven. It can't be true, I know, for Saint Peter would never pass such brandy as that."

By the time the encampment on the beach was organised, and arrangements made for tolerable comfort, Captain Grainger began to wonder what had become of the exploring party. He was not without hope that they might have obtained information of some value. Having provided as well as he could for his passengers, his next duty was to see what could be done to save the ship—a

matter which weighed heavily on the Captain's mind. This was his first misadventure of magnitude; heretofore his fortunes had been fabulously good. And now he felt rather in despair: for he full well knew the lethargic state of the Azores, and the impossibility of obtaining the kind of help he required.

"Not an engineer in the islands," he thought to himself, "and not a steamer of fifty horse power. I shall have to get to Liverpool any way I can, and then they'll supersede me, and send some other fellow to save the ship. Well, if one is to be shipwrecked, I should like it to be in some civilised country."

It was close on sunset when Captain Grainger, who was anxious about his missing friends, saw some of them approaching—four only out of the seven—Loraine, Leary, Jack Manly, and the poet. He hurried to meet them.

"What news?" he asked. "Where are the others?"

"It's a long story, Captain," said Loraine. "The worst thing about it is that there 's no chance of any help on the island. There

isn't a house upon it. The only inhabitants are a man and two children; they live in a cavern."

"I feared that there was no civilisation in the wretched little place. Well, I shall start a couple of boats to Terceira and St Michael's before sunrise to-morrow. But how about our other friends?"

"O they are going to stay in the cavern with these aborigines to-night," said Leary. "The man is English; Tachbrook discovered that he knew something about his family—I can't say what—so they have taken lodgings in his cavern, and I'm sure I hope they'll like it."

"You must be hungry," said the Captain. "We've plenty to eat, thank Heaven."

"Well," said Cincinnatus, "I can manage a slight refection; but the old fellow in the cave treated us very well. We had stewed kid, with oranges; and some wonderful purple fish that I never saw before, which he said was never caught except in lakes that had been the craters of volcanoes; and goat's milk cheese; and bananas in cream; and excellent coffee, from berries picked while we were there."

"I hope you got something to drink besides coffee," said Grainger.

"Yes," said Loraine, "a wonderful brewage made from grapes, oranges, lemons, citrons, bananas, and cinnamon, that had been allowed to ferment, and was, he said several years old. It was capital stuff, but rather too strong and rather too sweet."

CHAPTER XI.

THE TROGLODYTE.

"In the world's childhood all were troglodytes."

As man contains in himself the models of all living creatures that dwell on this planet, so the earth itself contains antitypes of all edifices which men erect, and all instruments they use. The oar was borrowed from the fish's fin; an oak has been the pattern of a lighthouse; the cones of Alps suggested the cathedral spire; the tors of Devon and Derby the cathedral tower; the frowning entrances of mighty caverns the cathedral gate; the arches of great forests the cathedral aisle. God made models for us, rough

yet sublime, of all that we could do. As a great poet has said—

> "The Bible is the earth; and we begin
> To learn a little of what lies within."

Had there been no caverns on the earth's surface, it may be doubted whether mankind would ever have learnt to build houses.

The Troglodyte of the Island of Hawks was very courteous to his unexpected visitors, and gave them aboriginal refreshment, which already has been described. The day was hot without; in the core of that cavern it was delectably cool. Beneath the natural floor the river outlet of the lake made endless music; while through the great window sea-birds flashed by, sometimes entering the cavern to find their nests in its mighty roof. The two young swimmers served their father's guests, without even the διαζώσμα. The scene was curious, and deserves a painter's treatment.

When the meal was over, the Troglodyte led them up rather a difficult stairway to the window looking across the sea, thirty feet at least above the floor of the cavern. There a natural bench existed, whereon they sat com-

fortably enough, looking out across the ocean towards America. The children had run away to amuse themselves.

"This is a curious habitation for an English gentleman of pretty old family," said the Troglodyte presently. "As you are all English, I feel disposed to tell you a part of my history; for imagine! I have seen no human creature but those two children for the seven years I have been on this island. The island itself is not many years old."

"What!" said Loraine. "How do you make that out?"

"Well, it isn't of age yet," said the old man, laughing. "It was thrown up by an earthquake, or rather a seaquake, about twenty years ago. I expect it will go down just as suddenly."

"Not to-day, I hope," said Leary.

"Yours must be a romantic story," said Miranda. "I wish these gentlemen would not interrupt it by unnecessary remarks. Please go on, and I will try to keep order."

"You shall be lady president," said the Troglodyte, courteously. "I will give you the second half of my story. I came from

England for two reasons—I disliked my relations, and I longed for adventure. I had plenty of money, and can get plenty now. I was shipwrecked on Terceira. There was a good deal of fun at Angra. I had no reason for going away, so I stayed. I fell in love with a most charming Portuguese girl, whom I will call Juanita. She was of good family; was exquisitely pretty—was ineffably lazy. We lived a pleasant easy life, and she gave birth to those two youngsters—and then she died of consumption. Just at that time my love of adventure revived, and I happened to hear of this wonderful island. I determined to explore it; bought a cutter, which I loaded with all I thought requisite for Crusoe life, and came over here. I have enjoyed it, though I have worn out nearly all my clothes."

"But you are not going to stay here," said Tachbrook. "Come home to England with us when we can get away."

"I will think of it," he said.

When they descended again to the cavern, the Troglodyte drew Tachbrook aside, and said—

"Do you know Rothescamp?"

"Indeed I do," said Harold, surprised.

"I wish you would stay here to-night, with your daughter, and the young man you call Jones. I can make you comfortable, really. Will you? Send the other men on to say you will come to-morrow."

"Agreed," said Harold.

So he told his friends that he had determined to stay the night in the cavern; and they four, as we have seen, returned to the shore and made their report. When they had left, the Troglodyte asked his remaining guests to stroll on the margin of the lake until he joined them. Hereunto they assented, crossing the chasm, and finding the lake more beautiful than before under the slant evening light.

"There is something queer about this old gentleman," said Tachbrook, as they loitered beside the lake. "That he *is* a gentleman is clear enough: but what an odd life for an Englishman of his stamp! And fancy those two little imps of his, running absolutely wild."

Miranda laughed, for at that moment the

two naked children were turning the wildest somersaults on the grass by the lake. And much more amused was Miranda when there presently emerged from his cavern the Troglodyte himself—but in how different a costume from the scanty goat-skins! He came before them like one of the sketches in Sams's window—a beaver hat, blue coat with brass buttons, long kerseymere waistcoat, knee breeches, silk stockings, shoes with square toes, and diamond buckles. There, in the Island of Hawks, the Troglodyte looked every inch a member of Brooks's. It was a perfect transformation scene. They stood amazed—the most amazed being Harold Tachbrook, who had some experience of old-fashioned dress.

The Troglodyte joined them, first ordering the children off to bed; a couple of young nudities seemed very much out of place near those highly respectable habiliments. Fancy Aphrodite in her customary costume walking down St James's Street under the eyes of the decorous old gentlemen who haunt the bow-windows of clubs! The Troglodyte guided his guests to a group of olive-

trees which overhung the lake; there they sat down.

"I asked you if you knew Rothescamp," he presently said to Harold. "Let me tell you why. I know it well; at least, I knew it well, years ago. When a boy I was fond of pictures, and used to spend hours in the old picture-gallery at Rothescamp-on-the-Hill."

"I was never there that I remember," said Harold. "I lived with my father in the village below."

"I see—I see! Now I begin to know who you are. Strange that we should meet in this island, where I expected to pass the remainder of my life in solitude. Passing strange!"

He remained silent for a moment. Then he said—

"Your name is Tachbrook?"

"Yes."

"So is mine."

All three of his auditors gave a perceptible start.

"I found you out," he proceeded to say, "by your own and your daughter's wonderful likeness to portraits in that famous old

gallery—portraits of your ancestors, some centuries old. There is a man painted there by Vandyke, who might be your twin brother. There are several ladies like your daughter; but one is so like, that you might think it was absolutely painted for her."

"Don't say there's anybody like me," exclaimed Tom Jones. "I'm JONES. I decline to be stuck in among your aristocratic people. I should feel quite unhappy in a picture-gallery. Fancy being hung up in the same place for centuries, with nobody to look at but your great-grandmother in a short frock as a shepherdess—ten years old."

The Troglodyte gave Tom Jones a queer smile, and then said to Harold—

"You don't, I suppose, know much of your family history. But of course you can tell me who is the present baronet?"

"Indeed I cannot. When I left England, there was nobody living at the old house, and the rumour of the village was that Sir Arthur Tachbrook was in a lunatic asylum. My father used to say that he did not believe that, although certainly of opinion that he was qualified for admission. His letters have

never mentioned Sir Arthur, and I am quite uncertain whether he is alive or dead. I do not even know whether he has children."

"If not," said the Troglodyte, "I am his heir, for I am his nephew, son of his only brother Theodore."

"How extraordinary!" exclaimed Harold. "Then what relation is there between you and me?"

"We are second cousins, I suppose; at any rate, we had the same great-grandfather. It is an odd place for cousins to meet."

"Very odd, but I am rather a believer in curious coincidences,—for my mother possessed some strange magnetic power, and I have inherited a kind of mystical tendency. I think the air of our Australian steppes has blown it away: I don't now believe much more than I can see."

"Don't believe half you can see," said the Troglodyte. "Since I have lived in this insular solitude, I have seen the strangest visions. I have seen a great fleet of warships pass close to the shore, and suddenly vanish. I have seen a woman walking on the smooth surface of that lake by moonlight.

I have seen an army besieging a city in the clouds of sunset. Between what we see and what we imagine, how slight is the difference! And is not imagination often stronger than sight? However, I don't think we have yet come to the end of our coincidences."

At this moment Miranda exclaimed—

"Look at the lake! How it is bubbling!"

They all looked. In the very middle of the lake the water was rising in a sort of mound, lifted evidently by some force from below.

"That's no vision," said Tom Jones. "What does it mean?"

"It means that we had better turn into the cavern, for there is another storm on the way. That lake is my barometer, as well as my fishpond: it is evidently the crater of a volcano, for it moves with every impulse of weather. This is going to be a big storm: I hope your shipmates are well sheltered."

"Shall *we* be well sheltered?" asked Miranda, "if one may put a selfish question."

"No storm has ever troubled my cavern," replied the Troglodyte. "But as you, being

a Tachbrook, are of course a brave young lady, I may venture to say that I never go to bed at night without thinking I may wake at the bottom of the sea in the morning. An island that so unexpectedly comes to the surface may disappear just as abruptly."

"I am not afraid," said Miranda, laughing; "for, don't you know, I am a kind of mermaid—I was born at sea."

The Troglodyte guided his guests out of the great hall in which they had dined into a square chamber of immense height, but not more than thirty feet each way. It had two windows: one looking seaward, a hundred feet from the ground; the other, not much more than an arrow-slit, close to the floor. From this they could watch the lake. The bore in its centre rose higher and higher. The sky grew as dark as if there were an eclipse. The Troglodyte lighted a fragrant fire of dry cinnamon, which gave them just sufficient light to see each other. Presently lightning zigzagged so vividly that it grew intolerable to the eye. They retreated from the window, and reclined on couches of fragrant leaves and grass, which lay along

the sides of the cavern. They did not talk much: the heightening fury of the storm absorbed their ideas. The flash of lightning and the roar of thunder and wind and sea grew more terrifying every instant. Tom Jones was the only member of the party who seemed thoroughly to enjoy the storm. He leaned on the ledge of the narrow rock-window, and watched the lightning cutting the air, and the water of the lake rising higher and higher. It rose so high that the lawn on which they had walked was now a part of the lake. He could see it advancing towards the entrance of the cavern.

"It looks as if we should soon be flooded," he said to the Troglodyte.

"Then we'll go to the first floor," he replied, unperturbed. Rising, he lighted a long stick of cinnamon, and led his guests up rather a rough ascent to a perfect suite of rooms opening one from the other. Rough-hewn they were—unpapered, untiled, unfloored; but far above possible access of water, and too firmly built to be blown away by wind. There were cosy rugs and wrappers for any who desired sleep: but who

could sleep while that storm roared outside? With restless minds in bodies forced to rest, they waited for the dying of the storm.

It died at midnight; but, looking down upon the moonlit lake, they saw that it had swelled so high, that to leave the cavern would be impossible until its recession.

"You are my prisoners," said the Troglodyte, gaily. "How long it will take for the water to recede it is impossible to say; but there is plenty to eat and drink in store, and I have no doubt we shall manage to exist."

A week passed before the lake reached its normal condition. During that time Tachbrook and the Troglodyte held many conversations which convinced them both of their cousinship. During that time Tom Jones and Miranda had many pleasant hours, though they were immured in a cavern, with scant glimpses of the light of the sun. Yet, somehow, they did not reach a complete understanding. Tom was uninstructed in the ways of women, or he would have known the meaning of that diamond light burning in the brown depths of Miranda's eyes, like

some jewel in fathoms of ocean. Miranda was unskilled in the erotic art, or she would have made Tom speak his mind in very quick time. She knew well enough what he wanted to say, but knew not how to make him say it.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BOW IN THE CLOUD.

"Ἠΰτε πορφυρέην Ἶριν θνητοῖσι τανύσσῃ
Ζεὺς ἐξ οὐρανόθεν."

THERE came a morning when the lake was calm and still; when across its misty roof there was arched a marvellous rainbow, vivid in colours, the very bridge for light-foot Iris to cross with message of peace to mortals; when Adam and Eve (thus had the Troglodyte named his children) could rush down and take their matutinal bath in safety; when they ate some fresh-caught crater-fish, and drank some fresh-plucked coffee on the margin of the lake. Harold and Tom Jones tried the waters of the lake that tranquil morning, and even Miranda had a quiet dip in a shallow place which Eve showed her,

where great basalt masses formed a natural dressing-room.

"We shall be able to go to the shore this morning," said Harold. "Grainger will be wondering what has become of us."

"Let us start at once," replied the Troglodyte. "Your daughter had better not come; let my youngsters show her some of the curiosities of the neighbourhood."

To this Miranda agreed, and Adam and Eve showed her many marvels. These young islanders trod the rocks with their naked feet more easily than the goats. Miranda was horror-stricken when she saw them run easily along a ledge of cliff not a foot wide, with a perpendicular precipice below sheer to the sea. It was the outer wall of the cavern. Beneath you could see the subterrene outlet of the lake, through which the water fell in a mighty cataract. These agile children clung to the giant creepers that fringed the rock, and threw themselves into the very midst of the waterfall.

Then, rushing back, unconscious of peril, they climbed great trees that overhung the cliff, and brought Miranda fruit. They took

her to a line of beach on one side the lake, where, instead of sand and shingle, you trod on nothing but sea-shells and fluorine crystals. They showed her a hole a foot wide which reached underground water; drop in a pebble, and up there came a furious jet of briny spray. They took her by an easy way up to a cliff overhanging the sea, where there were thousands of hawks' nests—the hawks so tame, from utter unacquaintance with the mischievous propensities of mankind, that they did not rise as you passed.

Meanwhile the Troglodyte and his companions were making their way towards the encampment through vineyard and orange-wood. When they reached the place, not a creature was to be seen, nor a single tent, nor any vestige of the camp. The sands were perfectly free from soil; had evidently been well washed by ocean during the second gale.

"They are all washed away, I fear," exclaimed Harold. "What a frightful thing!"

"Let us go and look for the ship," said Tom Jones.

They ran round the cliff towards the chasm into which the *Mighty Metropolis* had been

jammed. She was gone! Harold and Tom Jones stared at each other, speechless with amazement. They also stared across the sea; no sign was there of the mighty bulk of the great vessel. What could have happened? Where were dauntless Captain Grainger and his splendid ship? These questions they unavailingly put to each other, the Troglodyte quietly listening. At last he said—

"The steamer was jammed between those rocks, you say?"

"Yes," said Harold.

"And the passengers and crew were on the beach here?"

"Yes."

He remained awhile thoughtful; then he said—

"What has happened to the ship I know. What has happened to the men I do not know."

"Where is the ship then?" impetuously asked Tom Jones.

"Where? I am not conjurer enough to tell you that, though I might tell you something that would astonish you more. In these great storms in the Azores the sea rises very

fast and very high. No doubt the steamer was floated out of the fissure into which she was jammed. At the same time, the beach was probably many fathoms deep in water; so that, if your people remained here, they were all washed into the ocean."

"Surely some traces would be left of them."

"I think not," said the Troglodyte, "the sea rises and falls too rapidly. The only chance of their escape is, that Captain Grainger knew something of the character of these seas, and got everybody on board when the storm began. If so, they may be safe; if not, you 'll see no soul of them again."

"Grainger knows these seas well enough," said Tom Jones. "Would the storm give him time?"

"I think it would. If you remember, the bore in the lake rose gradually. I am inclined to hope that, when he saw the weather change and the sea rise, he got all hands on board at once. If he did, and the ship was not much injured by the crash, he may be landing his passengers at Liverpool at this moment."

"I heartily hope he may," said Harold.

"But now, my good cousin, how are we to get away? I am the more anxious about it since I found out you were heir-presumptive to the Tachbrook baronetcy."

"Let's make a raft," cried Tom Jones, impetuously, "and drift away to the nearest inhabited island."

"I don't think I should like to put Miranda on a raft," replied Tachbrook. "No; better keep watch for a passing sail. We are pretty close to the usual track of ships; we can easily signal them with a flag or a bonfire."

"Better not say anything to your daughter about the uncertainty we are in; she would be so shocked," said the Troglodyte. "Tell her the ship has got off, and left you imprisoned. And now, as we may as well go back again, I'll show you a different way."

Climbing up a steep bit of cliff, they reached an aperture which led to a flight of natural stairs, that seemed as if they descended to the centre of the earth. After descending several yards, the steps ended. Through the chasm beneath, the sands were visible a hundred feet down; but right across this chasm there was another opening. The

Troglodyte leapt across with ease; his companions successfully followed him, not without a slight qualm. They found themselves in a kind of natural corridor, with gaps in the rock at intervals, framing superb sea-scapes. Now and then the floor of the corridor ceased, and it became necessary to spring across the chasms thus formed—chasms through which was perceptible either a group of rocks or the sea itself. When they had walked about fifteen minutes, they came to a staircase leading upward. Ascending this, they reached daylight at last—or rather, twilight.

Through an archway they came upon a small platform of rock, with a natural parapet. Above, there was the roar of falling water, an inveterate iris colouring the spray as the sunshafts shot through. Below, the mad water flung itself down a sheer abyss, boiling fiercely. It was impossible for the eye to search that awful depth.

"Where are we?" said Harold.

"You don't recognise the gulf, though you have crossed it," said the Troglodyte, with a laugh. "This is my moat. Do you see

that tangle of creepers? We shall have to climb to the surface by that."

Therewith he caught the natural rope, and made his way upwards. Harold and Tom Jones were obliged to follow, through the blinding mist of the waterfall; but they had been through so many strange adventures, that they gave up being surprised. The strong stems of the creepers formed a convenient ladder, and they soon emerged, a little damp and out of breath, on the floor of the great cavern. Miranda and her young companions had not yet returned,

They dried themselves by a fire of cinnamon, drank some of the Troglodyte's insular liquid, and held a council of three.

"What's to be done?" said Harold. "We cannot be permanent prisoners in this island, pleasant as it is. There would be nobody to marry Miranda."

"Pardon me," quoth Tom Jones; "there are three of us who might be rivals. Our host might marry again, you know; and then there is myself; and then there is young Adam. What if he should fall suddenly in love? He will soon be old enough."

"I hope not," said the Troglodyte. "Let us be serious. Till I met you, I had made up my mind that, if I were obliged to remain on this little island, it would be no great hardship. The soil and climate are such that we get all we want with trifling trouble. It is mere amusement to catch crater-fish and make goats' milk cheese—to pick oranges and grapes and bananas. This cavern is a palace, and there are no rent and taxes to pay. Seven years of this isolation had made me rather careless as to whether I ever should leave the place; but you came, and I recognised a kinsman; and your talk told me of what was going on everywhere, and I longed to visit my old home. The longing strengthens. I am amazed at myself. After seven tranquil years in this beautiful island, I am rendered restless by my very first visitors, and pine to return to a world wherein I know I shall be infinitely bored."

"I am glad you have decided to go," said Harold. "Now, the great question is, how to manage it? We ought to find a good point to signal from, and keep watch there in turns."

"There can be no better point than the conical hill above the fissure into which your ship was driven. It is right in the way of all vessels going north-eastward."

"Good," said Tom Jones. "Then let us set up a flagstaff there, and light a bonfire at night, and keep watch by turns night and day. What say you?"

"First-rate notion," quoth Harold, and the Troglodyte agreed; and forthwith they set out in search of a tall tree that would serve as a pole. This was soon found: and that very evening the flagstaff was set up, carrying a white flag made out of a sheet. Next day they started in procession; and drove the staff into the ground, at the lofty point which the Troglodyte had suggested. It was a lovely conical hill covered with grass—on one side you saw illimitable sea—on the other the interior of the island, and the great fleet of islands beyond, ships too strong to be driven from their anchorage by any common gale. And from this time regular watch was kept up both day and night—the flag always flying, and a noble fire built every sunset. This duty of signalling was executed in a frolic-

some way: and though the Troglodyte and Harold and Tom did the work nominally, Miranda and Adam and Eve did a good deal of the actual work. As to the children, their young eyes were telescopes.

CHAPTER XIII.

TOM'S TWO SECRETS.

"If you have a secret,
Go tell it in waste places, far away
From all but elves and goblins; yet be sure
Some swift inquisitive elf will pick it up;
And what you said at midnight to the stars
Shall be proclaimed at the High Cross at noon."

TOM JONES had the first night-watch—in such matters, *juniores priores*. They lighted the bonfire at sunset, and then his friends left him, Miranda giving him a merry smile as she vanished down the pathway. Gradually the magical lights—those ghostly echoes of sunset—died in the east and west; grey grew the concave sky, and darker grey the levels of the sea.

Night-watches are good for the restless

spirit of man. You are face to face, nothing to disturb, with the most marvellous and inexplicable works of God. No wonder the Chaldean shepherds were astronomers, seeing how close seemed the stars during their long solitary nights. Also, when you are so close to the Creator, you get a new and special introduction to yourself; you are not the same man among your jolly comrades over the wine as when you are absolutely alone upon a windy hill, with nothing between yourself and God.

Tom Jones had two secrets, and wished he hadn't. He pondered over them through this calm and lovely night, while the bonfire blazed on the height, and the ocean was phosphorescent, as if to mock the stars. It was a marvellous time. Those stars move faster than the light of ocean; yet distance makes them seem immovable. They are coming or going with measureless speed, yet we call them fixed.

Leaning against the flagstaff, watching his bright bonfire, and looking sometimes at the tracks of scintillant light upon the sea, Tom passed the hours in half-conscious soliloquy

and self-examination. He looked back over his life with doubtful feelings. Had he been right, after all, to sever himself from his family, and pass eighteen years in Australian wilds, because his father neglected him and his schoolmaster flogged him? When a man gets an opportunity of seriously reflecting on his past life, he can usually touch one point of departure which was the real commencement of his career, whether that career were success or failure. At the moment, it possibly seemed to him unimportant which course he took; but the two paths diverged more widely every year, and the time arrives when it was easy to see whether you have made a mistake or not. It is not impossible that a mathematical formula might be constructed to take in all cases of this kind. The astrologers could do it, doubtless. Some such vague fancy had Tom Jones, as the clear stars filled the air with quiet light. He would have liked to question the stars. Had they indeed any influence on the lives of men? Could their runes be read? What would he not give to know his fate before making an attempt to change its course! But, probably

because he had not faith enough, there reached him no intimation of guidance, so he had to decide for himself.

"How I love Miranda!" he thought, smoking his pipe by that solitary fire which blazed unanswered. "I have seen no women, and after Miranda I have no wish to see any. Surely she is perfect, if there is any such thing as perfection. She *must* have some small faults, of necessity: perhaps I shall find them out if I am lucky enough to make her my wife. She can't be quite immaculate. Indeed, I should be sorry if she were; for I should like to amuse myself by correcting her little peccadilloes. But shall I tell her? If I do, will she laugh at me as an old fogy, whom she has always regarded as a kind of amateur uncle? Why have I thrown away my youth on those Australian sheep-walks? But, then, if I had not, I should never have seen Miranda; and not to have seen her would have left my life incomplete. Certainly I know very little about women, but there can be no other like her, I'll swear."

In this fashion through the summer night

did Tom Jones meditate on the first of his two secrets. At last he decided to pluck up courage and tell Miranda his first secret the first time there came an opportunity. Alack! how many an opportunity already had he lost! If you cannot tell your sweetheart your desire during a month or two at sea, better not try to do so ashore.

The quiet night went on. The bonfire blazed. An eastern light came slowly up the sky, and slowly grew more strong. Then purple and rose and saffron streaked the heaven; then came the gold rim of the rising sun, widening and widening till the perfect disc threw level light upon the sea. Tom Jones forget his troubles in the glory of the sight. To him a sunrise was no such novelty as to the jaded citizen who sees it seldom, unless he is up a little later than usual. Many a sunrise had Tom Jones seen upon the green plains of Australia, when there was a long day's ride to be done; but this sunrise on the sea appeared to him the loveliest sight he had ever known; and he looked eastward as eagerly as if he had been Orion in his blindness.

So eager was his gaze, that he was quite unaware he had a companion. When, having drunk in the beauty of the scene to the uttermost, he looked round again—behold! there was Miranda. With long hair freely flowing over rosy shoulders, with cheeks flushed and eyes brightened by exercise, with dress succinct like that of Milton's stripling cherub, she looked the very spirit of the scene. Her bright, brown eyes sparkled with pleasure; her lips looked so provokingly kissable that Tom scarce knew how to resist the temptation.

"Ah Tom," she said, "I have been by your side these ten minutes, and you did not know it. You look quite romantic, staring at the sunrise. Have you seen any ships, or have you been asleep?"

"What brings *you* here so early?" asked Tom.

"Why, to see the sun rise, of course. Do you suppose the sun is entirely your property, and nobody else may look at it without your august permission? Quite a mistake, I assure you, Mr Jones."

She looked so bewitching as she talked this

merry nonsense, that Tom Jones was regularly done for.

"May I tell you a secret?" he asked.

"Two if you like."

"I do want to tell you *two*. Will you listen?"

"Oh! let me guess what they are. I know —one is that you want your breakfast; the other is that you would like coffee and a buttered roll."

"You won't be serious," said Tom. "My secrets are really important."

"If so, hadn't you better keep them yourself? If you tell me, I may forget they *are* secrets, and tell them without thinking to somebody else. If you can't keep your own secrets, how can you expect me to?"

"Now do please be serious," said Tom.

"O well, I 'll be serious. Don't put on such a long face. Come, I 'm ready. Please begin. Secret number one."

"I love you," cried Tom, hotly, taking her plump, warm hand in his.

"O dear, dear!" she cried, laughing merrily. "Do you call *that* a secret? Why, I could have told you that months ago."

"Then can *you* love me?" exclaimed Tom.

"Asking a question is a different thing from telling a secret," she said. "I did not offer to submit to be catechised. Come, Tom, out with your other secret. It must be a good one, to make up for the other's being no secret at all."

"O you are a wicked witch!" he cried. "I don't believe you care an atom about me. Now do you?"

"Mr Jones, you are an impostor. You promised me two secrets, and I have not yet had one; and you positively want me to answer your questions just as if you had fulfilled your engagement."

Tom was silent for a few minutes, and looked at the sea as if he thought a plunge in it would do him good. Then he said—

"Well, I know my other secret is worth knowing; so, if you 'll answer my question, I 'll tell it you."

"What a shabby idea! after having offered me your secrets for nothing. I call it mean Tom. Well, repeat your question."

"You know what it is. Do you love me?"

"No, not a bit," she replied merrily; but

there was a look in her eye that made Tom, dull fellow though he was, read her reply the other way. Old Helios, who once informed against Ares and Aphrodite, might on this occasion have given evidence of a meeting of lips. Miranda blushed—for she knew it was the kiss of betrothal.

"Now, sir," she said, "for secret number two."

A seamew was screaming just above their heads at this moment. Perhaps Tom feared a bird of the air might carry the matter, for he softly whispered his second secret in Miranda's ear.

"How delightful!" she cried. "Dear Tom! is it really true?"

"Quite."

"But why not tell papa?"

"I think it is better not, till we are in England. We will talk it over. See! they are coming to relieve me."

The Troglodyte and Harold were climbing the hill. Her father looked rather curiously at Miranda, who had the prettiest possible flush of excitement and pleasure on her countenance. She seemed a nymph of hill

and sea—a creature moulded of the elements, with the glitter of the wave in her eyes and the splendour of sunlight in her hair. As to Tom Jones, he looked quite worthy of her. So at least thought his friend and her father, who guessed, from the aspect of each, that the critical moment had come and gone. But he only said—

"Glad you've taken to early rising, Miranda. Now, Tom, I'm in charge; go and refresh yourself. *Mind you sleep!*"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE WATCHERS OF THE SEA.

"Maria vasta visens."

WATCHERS of the vague immeasurable sea are apt to grow despondent when, through long days and nights, no sail is seen. Our party on the Island of Hawks were not of this temper. The Troglodyte, having dwelt on the mystical island a mystical number of years, was in no hurry to leave it. Indeed, when he thought thereon, he grew melancholy, well aware that in no other island should he find such rare beauty, such inexhaustible fertility, such absolute quietude.

"If I get back to England," reflected the Troglodyte, "I *may* become a baronet, with a

great estate. What estate could equal this island? What is the good of being a baronet? However, I suppose I must do it for the sake of Adam and Eve."

Adam and Eve themselves were quite satisfied with their position, and resented being put into rough clothing, which their father made of goatskins and the like, as he rightly thought that, if a ship reached the island, it would hardly do to put on board a couple of young nudities. They had outgrown their clothing long ago, and the Troglodyte did not think making more worth the trouble. To these wild youngsters, however, the trammels of dress were an abomination; only by threat of chastisement could they be induced to wear their rough habiliments. When they were beyond the paternal ken, they threw their new clothes aside, and rejoiced in freedom from restraint. These young barbarians show us the difference between barbarism and civilisation in its crucial point. Barbarism is unclothed in mind and body; civilisation is clothed as to both—mentally by hypocrisy, corporally by fashion.

Harold Tachbrook was the most restless of the islanders. He, though quiet enough during his Australian sojourn, the sojourn of his own choice, was now eager to escape from his enforced imprisonment. He had a kind of calenture. He dreamt of the green fields and good dinners of his youth—of the orchards he had robbed, the trout he had caught, the birds' nests he had taken, the girls he had kissed. There is no place like England for boyhood's harmless sports. To be an English boy, wisely treated and in perfect health, is an amazingly fortunate position. George Canning once said, at an Eton dinner in London, "Whatever might be the success of after life, whatever gratification of ambition might be realised, whatever triumphs might be realised, no one is ever so great a man as when he was a sixth-form boy at Eton." Canning was right. The boy has no cares. His ambitions are free from the dross which clings to most ambitions of manhood. He desires to be the best rower or cricketer—the best writer of classic verse or prose—the best mathematician; but these desires are wholly unconnected with the

after-thought of money. The glory of a great public school is, that it is a world without worldliness.

I am bound to say that the other two members of the party were not at all eager to leave the island. They had what Americans call a "good time." Both were rather ignorant in the scholastic sense; for Miranda had never been taught anything save by that German enthusiast, and Tom Jones had distinguished himself at school simply by reversing the natural order of things, and thrashing his ludimagister. However, scholastic guidance was in no wise necessary to make them very agreeable one to the other. Adam and Eve (I mean the primevals) could have had no education worth mentioning; it may be questioned whether it ever occurred to them that seventy pence were five and tenpence, or that *chemises* ought not to be spelt *shimes*. You see they had no weekly washing-list.

Watch was kept on the windy peak day after day, week after week; but never a white sail came that way, night after night, day after day. The Troglodyte began to fancy there was some sort of necromancy, since many a length

of days before ships had passed the island shore. As to Harold, he looked on ocean with a strange magnetical emotion; as if he could see beneath its water the quaint old village, the landlord's daughter, and his father amid old books shut fast, saying, "Sons run away, but books will last." But Tom and fair Miranda cared nought for the future, since they shared a perfectly happy life, and knew that each to the other was loyal and true. They lived and loved, and watched and waited—not at all in haste for the good ship fated to carry them off to England.

Miranda and Tom Jones without a doubt passed pleasant hours where that queer white flag fluttered. A thousand pleasant things they talked about; their lips a thousand curious fancies uttered. Tom used to chaff—Miranda used to pout sometimes, while overhead the strong storm muttered. But lovers little care for change of weather, being alone upon a hill together.

These two were better off than all the rest. If Tom's watch came by day, Miranda passed her day beside him, no unwelcome guest. She sat and worked, and looked across the vast

sea-levels, vexed with many a foamy crest. Tom used to wish that summer day might last always. Time's progress is a perfect pest when you are sitting on the turf beside the lady who is soon to be your bride.

And when Tom watched at night she saw him off up to the top of the steep sea-cliff, carrying some slight refreshment. Let no reader scoff at such kind aid. When people think of marrying, they should not let mere pseudo-philosophic fancies guide them. Fair Miranda, tarrying beside the flagstaff, had nor fear nor shame, being Tom's own property, except in name.

Yes; but I think that the pleasantest hour was when, in the morning, merry Miranda came and brought her lover his breakfast: goats' milk—a mighty can—and abundant grapes and bananas. Tom used to sit on the grass and be waited on. Tom used to like it. Can you not easily fancy the two, while the orient purple flushed a miraculous sky, and the sea was golden and sapphire? There they sat like a king and a queen. They were king and queen then — royal owners of youth and of strength, and of beauty and

courage. Tom ate his fruit like a prince of the earth, and swallowed his goats' milk far more gaily than wine is drunk in pale Piccadilly.

When Miranda had taken her seat, Tom would lie at his lady's feet; and the two would gaze across the sea, and wonder what the world would be.

In this fashion did the two young people chatter nonsense from morn to noon, from noon to dewy eve. They were in love—which means, they saw each other and none else. Not unsuitable seemed they. Tom was a dauntless daring delicious dunce: Miranda was a versatile volatile vivacious vixen. Perhaps Miranda's notion of remaining with Tom on the Isle of Hawks would have been rather a good one, if possibly it could have been carried out. It was not possible. Tom Jones pined for England more than any one of the party beside. His second secret—which none save Miranda knew—impelled him homewards: beyond which there was the natural impulse of a young Englishman who had left England a boy, and now desired to return thither in the very prime and flower of manhood.

"Miranda, my love," he said, "you know my secret, and you agree with me that it should be kept till we reach England and see how matters stand there. The thought of living a poetic life, all indolence and love, in this happy island, is tempting; but I cannot help thinking I was born for stronger work. I want to be back in England, and learn what England is like, and do my duty."

"You are right, dearest love," said Miranda; "and I am a naughty temptress. Punish me as you like, only don't cease to love me. I have led a lazy life, and the laziness of this island is lovely, and I cannot quite understand your desire to be doing something. But you are my master—do as you will."

"Ah!" he said, drawing a long breath, "you are a darling—you are my own. I plague you, I know. But I am longing for life—longing to be in the old world—longing to set myself against other men, and to try whether they are stronger or weaker than I. You know, my beauty, what power I shall have to do good,—and God knows I desire to

do good,—you know, and you only. It would be wicked of me to pass an easy lazy life, when I have such power within my grasp."

"What you say is true," replied Miranda. "I have been misled by the lovely indolence of our time on this island. Oh! I wish a ship would come! I am as tired as you are now."

That very evening a small steamer bound for Terceira passed, and perceived the signal, and stood in. There was general excitement, and a rapid rush to get together all that was necessary to carry away. The steamer sent a couple of boats, and the islanders entered them with their scanty luggage. The Troglodyte (whom now, as he is going to Europe, we may call Gilbert Tachbrook), his children Adam and Eve, Harold Tachbrook, Tom Jones, Miranda Tachbrook, were the passengers. With regret they left the island; it was a lovely spot, devoted to the Goddess of Indolence, if indeed there be any such goddess.

Not far had the boats to go before reaching the steamer. Yet that short distance was not destined to be passed safely. Suddenly the sky darkened; a black squall smote the

sea; the boat in which Miranda and her father and Tom Jones were passengers was turned keel upwards just as they reached the steamer. There was unutterable confusion. Other boats were promptly lowered; Harold Tachbrook was picked up quietly floating on his back (a prince of swimmers!) holding his daughter's head easily above water. They were got on board as fast as possible. When Miranda came to herself, her first inquiry was—

"Where is Tom?"

Harold Tachbrook, tired with his exertions, had thought that of course Tom was safe enough. But the steamer had almost reached Terceira when Miranda awoke to ask this question, and Tom Jones was not on board. Strange! for he was an unrivalled swimmer. Harold quieted his daughter, for her own sake, with a mild fiction, and then went astern and looked toward the island, and wondered whether his good friend had landed there.

"I 'll go straight back at once," he resolved.

CHAPTER XV.

LIVERPOOL.

"Did Rome build Carthage?
And were the Hannibals and Scipios partners
Ere they grew rivals? Better than soft friends
Are enemies keen."

It has been said that England built New York. Nothing this to be proud of, perhaps; for New York is not quite a model city, and differs widely from Athens or Rome, or even Babylon; wherefore the builders of cities like Westminster and Winchester have no need to claim this New York as their own. It may, however, be admitted in return, that the United States built Liverpool. That town has never been a favourite of mine, though it is a place where you meet pleasant company.

It is a monotonous place. The Liverpool folk are very proud of themselves; and there is a cosmopolitan air about them, brought in by the sea breeze, which comes refreshingly up the Mersey; and they are singularly enterprising in their own special groove. But they have one groove only. Some English cities have had a literature of their own: Liverpool has not yet reached this level, notwithstanding what has been done for it by Roscoe and the Broughs.

The time seems to have altogether departed when towns like York, Bath, Bristol, were centres of country influence, of local culture, of literary and dramatic success. London has magnetised all the clever fellows. This is regretable. Country towns of reasonable magnitude give a brilliant man or a charming woman better chances than they can find in what De Quincey aptly called "the Nation of London." Immense cities are self-destructive. Their west end is frivolous; their east end is squalid; their north and south are dreary and slow. All cities follow the great geographic law of movement westward, leaving behind them on the north and south the dull dwellings

of crass citizens. You can tell the man from his abode—the woman also. Wide is the difference between Kensington and Stepney, between Holloway and Herne Hill, though all four are within four miles of the village where Queen Eleanor's Cross stood of old. As the overgrown city pushes its horns westward, Greenford, and Hayes, and Hillington will be fashionable parts; indeed, it will not surprise me if, in days to come, Stoke Pogis should be looked upon as East London, and a house at Knowl Hill, now letting for fifty pounds a year, should be thought cheap at a thousand.

What the Troglodyte predicted was very much what occurred to the *Mighty Metropolis*. The sudden rise of the tide floated her off. Grainger, an experienced navigator, with some knowledge of Azore eccentricities, got his people on board the moment he saw the sea rising. The ship, all teak and iron, did her duty well; and the voyage to Liverpool was accomplished without difficulty. Clipped as she had been by the rocks—driven fiercely into a via by the wind-driven hammer of the wave—she bore the strain.

The run from the Azores to England was in all respects fortunate and favourable. Grainger, loyal to his passengers, and a good king to his subjects, could not help regretting the inexorable necessity which had caused him to leave Harold Tachbrook and his daughter and Tom Jones behind. He determined to despatch a small steamer in search of them the moment he reached Liverpool. His only consolation was that both Tachbrook and Tom Jones were not easily alarmed, and would probably find their way home whatever happened.

As to the passengers, their opinions as to their missing fellow-travellers varied. The future Sir Edward Wilson was, on the whole, well pleased: those benighted people had never treated with enough reverence the illustrious gentleman who was going home to be knighted. Nor were his wife and daughter very sad: Miranda's beauty and grace had effaced their aristocratic air of the Antipodes, and had even lured from their side the elegant hope and heir of the house of Wilson. That same hope and heir is believed to have torn his dishevelled locks in the privacy of

his own cabin. He had just begun to persuade himself that he had made a sort of a kind of an impression on Miranda's virgin heart.

Captain Stuart, though rather a humbug, showed real feeling on the occasion. Below the outer crust of this reckless adventurer there was a vein of chivalry; and though he took chloroform when he thought of being drowned like a rat, he would have fought like a Bayard for a lady of Miranda's type. Cincinnatus Meunier rushed into verse, of course, and recited it with such redoubtable fluency, that the sailors sent a round robin to the captain protesting that it was unlucky.

The two little Mansard girls, whom Miranda had always treated with a kindness born of pity, yet with no pity perceptible in it, managed to make themselves miserable all the way home; but Leary the irrepressible, and Harry Loraine the immovable, did their utmost to console them, each in his different way. Leary made fun of the whole business.

"Faith," he said, "it will be Robinson

Crusoe over again, just for a week or two. There's plenty to eat on the island. Miss Tachbrook can cook like an angel, as anybody can see, and her father will catch fish and turn turtles, and Mr Jones will shoot all the birds of the air. Egad, I'd like to be with them, only I should spoil sport! I don't think Mr Tom and Miss Miranda would care for the third party when papa goes off to smoke his cigar."

The girls could not help laughing at Leary's way of putting it. Loraine was graver.

"I think they are safe," he said. "Both Tachbrook and his friend had knocked about the world a good deal, and knew what to do in a difficulty. As to Miss Tachbrook, I think she would be ready for anything that happened."

Both the Miss Mansards enthusiastically agreed.

When the *Mighty Metropolis* steamed into Liverpool, Captain Grainger was the hero of the hour, and all the reporters of all the papers wanted to "interview" him. But he wouldn't stand it; he used stronger language than he had ever before been known to use, except

in the teeth of a gale; he went off to charter a steamer in search of his missing passengers. The reporters, in default, went off to interview Sir (beg pardon, Mr) Edward Wilson. That illustrious personeity was nothing loth. He liked to be interviewed. It was a high tribute to his dignity. He was clear in his own mind—("Observe, gentlemen, this is only the opinion of a person who has obtained merely colonial celebrity, but who nevertheless has been deemed worthy of the honour of knighthood by the singularly able advisers of Her Most Gracious Majesty")—that the *Mighty Metropolis* was not a vessel at all equivalent to perform the duties expected of it, and that the captain, though a most excellent man, was scarcely the right person to intrust with the care of passengers whose welfare was of importance to the world.

"By the holy poker!" said an Irish reporter, when the magnificent Wilson had dismissed his deputation with a lofty courtesy that would befit a prime minister, "that man's delightful. He wants a big ship built specially for him. You 'll see he 'll patronise the Queen when she knights him."

A few days, and the passengers by the *Mighty Metropolis* had dispersed over the country. A few days, and the romantic adventure of that great steamship had exhausted the fluent pens of a few hundred journalists, and was as completely forgotten as the voyage of Jonah round the Cape of Good Hope. As to the aforesaid passengers, as we shall see little more of the majority, we may wish them farewell now. The little Mansard twins found their mother's mother a charming and loving old lady, with a kind of honeyed strictness about her, living in a quaint old country house of the Elizabethan sort. Their history is no affair of ours; but I believe they are both happily married by this time.

Leary, failing an offer from the *Times*, stayed at Liverpool, and started a newspaper —people are always starting newspapers in Liverpool. Captain Stuart went to London; so did the poet Meunier; so did Harry Loraine. They went by the same train, and smoked and talked all the way to town. Loraine was so amused with the aspirations of his comrades, that he asked them to

breakfast with him in the Albany next day. They accepted. For himself, he had telegraphed to his servant to have dinner ready for him, and ready it was.

When the breakfast-hour came, both Stuart and Meunier were punctual. Though Loraine had been to the other side of the world, everything was in perfect order. His people were accustomed to his ways: any morning, when he walked quietly out into Piccadilly and called a cab, he might be going away for an hour, or for a year. Any day he might appear without warning, and expect a good dinner to be served in an hour.

This day, his guests enjoyed a pleasant breakfast, and there was much easy talk. Loraine quite understood these two men, neither of whom quite understood him. He saw that Stuart was a plausible fellow, with a desire to spend money, but with no knowledge of the right way of making it. He saw that Cincinnatus was an illiterate imitative man, who, having been flattered by fools in far latitudes and longitudes, was now come to London to show himself the greatest poet in the world. He smiled inwardly at both of

them, listened to their talk, and gave them an excellent breakfast.

Mr Wilson and family arrived in due time at the Grosvenor Hotel. They took a furnished house at Something Gate, Hyde Park. They were knighted—at least Sir Edward was; but Rumour—wicked witch!—declares that the magnificent Wilson family do not find themselves appreciated in London. The Colonial Secretary has not yet asked Sir Edward to dinner. Not a single duchess has left her card on Lady Wilson. The whole family are rapidly becoming democratic.

I must not forget poor Jack Manly. His irascible, but generous father forgave him, saying—

"Confound you, Jack! you're good for nothing else: you must stay at home and live with me."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE RETURN HOME.

Raphael. His village is the best to every villager.
The Roman erudite poet, reckless yachting-man,
Thought Sirmio fairest of the world's peninsulas.
Alonette. This is the dreariest of existing villages.
Raphael. Read, child!
Alonette. I'd rather flirt. What *can* I read, papa?
Raphael. Here's Villchius *De Mysteriis Magicalibus*—
A most entrancing book.

The Comedy of Dreams.

WHEN Harold and his party arrived at Terceira, instant inquiry was made for a vessel that would take them to the Island of Hawks. This was easily found. It was agreed that the Troglodyte should remain at Terceira till Harold returned, as it was necessary to buy some clothes for his children and himself, now that he had given up his wild life. Harold begged Miranda also to stay; but she was too

anxious about Tom, so she accompanied her father. When they arrived at the island, they made their way as quickly as possible to the Troglodyte's cavern, hoping to find Tom there. They knew that Tom, being such an excellent swimmer, would be sure to find his way to the island, and that he would depend upon their sending him means of escape. But they could not find him. The cavern was just as they left it, with the various rude household or cavernhold implements which the Troglodyte had used lying about. There was no sign that any one had been there since they left. They wandered about the island till it was dark; they shouted, but were only answered by the echoes of their own voices. They determined to search once more on the next day; so they slept in the vessel, just off the island. The next day's search was as fruitless; so they left and turned back to Terceira sadly. But Miranda was not without hope. "Do not despair, papa," she said; "I know he is safe. Perhaps we shall find him at Terceira when we return;" for Harold had asked the Troglodyte to have inquiries made of any vessels that came in, whether Tom had been

picked up. Every minute Miranda was saying to herself, "I know he is safe. He cannot be drowned." Perhaps she was not altogether uninfluenced by the strong spirit of her ancestress Sobieska, a spirit which had while on earth found entrance into higher spheres. When they reached Terceira there was no news of Tom. Little Adam and Eve were looking disconsolate in ordinary costume, even more uncomfortable than a labouring man looks in his Sunday clothes. The Troglodyte was already tired of civilised life, and was wishing himself back at the Island of Hawks. Sorry as he was that no trace had been found of Tom, he could not help being eager to ask how his island was looking.

"There is one thing very odd about the poor fellow," said the Troglodyte, "you say he is no relation to us, Harold?"

"None whatever. His name is Jones. We have been knocking about together for eighteen years, and he told me his history—what little there was to tell—for he was only fourteen when he came to Australia, and he had run away from school."

"Of course, you must know," said the

Troglodyte; "but if I had not been told his name was Jones, I should have said it was Tachbrook. He is marvellously like the Tachbrooks."

Miranda was listening eagerly to this, when her father said—

"What do you think about it, Miranda?"

Miranda seemed a little confused as she said—

"O, I have not seen any Tachbrooks, except you and cousin Gilbert and myself."

It was arranged that they should go to England at once. Tom Jones, if picked up by any vessel touching at Terceira, would have reached there ere this. Their hope was that they should find him in England. It was a sad journey for them the next few days. Harold had looked forward to seeing his father, and Miranda to seeing the grandfather of whom she had heard so much. And Tom had talked so much of going to Rothescamp. He was always asking questions about the place. It had been so often described to him by Harold, that he seemed to know every inch of it. And now Harold must go there without him.

Harold had one hope. The Captain of the vessel which brought them from the Island of Hawks to Terceira said that a strange yacht was seen off the Azores at the time that Tom was missed. "She was going fast, as if racing," the Captain had said.

When our travellers reached Liverpool, they at once sent notice to Dr Septimus of their arrival. This was happy news for the Doctor; for but a few days before, he had had a visit from Captain Grainger, who told him how he had been obliged to get his ship off, and leave Harold and Miranda behind. The Doctor knew he should see his children soon, but he had not hoped to see them yet. When the Captain came down to Rothescamp, he was, as may be supposed, well received. Indeed, the Doctor and the Captain seemed to become old friends at once, so thoroughly did they understand each other. The Captain had sailed many treacherous seas, and taken ships through many terrible perils: the Doctor had saved many human creatures from falling too early into the grasp of death. They had their common measure. To fight a ship through a storm,

or a soul through a fever, is of equal moment.

Captain Grainger had told the Doctor that Harold had found some relation on the island. "What relation can it be?" thought the Doctor; "surely it is not Gilbert come to life again, he has disappeared so many years. Perhaps it's that little rascal of Priscilla's. I wonder who it is?"

So when Harold telegraphed from Liverpool to say that he had arrived, and should come home the next day, the Doctor telegraphed back, and said—

"Bring your new-found relation, if he is with you."

This puzzled Harold, who had intended to surprise his father by introducing cousin Gilbert to him.

"Who can have told my father?" he said —"Captain Grainger, perhaps. At any rate, it must be some one from the *Mighty Metropolis*, which shows that at least some of the passengers arrived safely in England."

"I wonder whether I shall find any more relations besides my grandfather when I get to Rothescamp," said Miranda.

"No, I think not," said Harold. "We have some distant relations who have never visited Rothescamp for years. The present Baronet lives abroad, and, I believe, was never married."

The old Doctor's house brightened up as it had not done for many a year. The lights were twinkling from many of the windows when the travellers arrived. The Doctor, at his books, was trying to appear as if nothing unusual were going to happen. But he did not seem quite to know which book it was he wanted. He found it necessary to go to the book-case often; and as he passed the window, he would stand for a minute and listen for the sound of wheels. Then he would find that his spectacles seemed misty, and wanted removing frequently. Then he rang for his housekeeper, to ask if she was quite sure the bedrooms were aired—for it was long since he had had visitors; and was she sure that everything was provided for the young lady which she should require?

Now they arrive, and the old man goes out to meet them. The housekeeper, who is standing back in the hall, waiting while intro-

ductions are going on, catches sight of two rather wild-looking children.

"Lawk a mercy!" she thought to herself, "what shall we do with them two children in the house?"

And I think before they left the poor old woman was nearly frantic; for they climbed up the staircase, and up any other dangerous place, like cats, and they asked such wonderful questions of the housekeeper, into whose charge they were given.

"I say, Mrs Dawson," said Adam, "why does everybody wear clothes here?"

"Clothes, my dear, why, you wouldn't go without them, would you?"

"We never used to wear any in our home."

Mrs Dawson thought the sooner "them young savages" went away to the outlandish parts where they came from the better. "And only to think of them being real Tachbrooks," she said; "I am sure their mother must have been one of those nigger savages we read of."

The Doctor was delighted with Miranda. Gilbert he had not seen for many years, and had supposed he was dead. He, who

was so fond of staying at home himself, liked to meet men who had seen the world, and sought adventure and found it. He and the Troglodyte would chatter pleasantly, and for hours.

"And now, we shall be having you at Rothescamp when Sir Arthur dies, I suppose," said the Doctor.

"Yes, I suppose I am the heir, as I understand Sir Arthur never married."

"I think it is generally understood that Sir Arthur never married, but there is some mystery in the family, and there is just a chance that your title may be disputed. But it will depend only on one person, who has not been heard of for about twenty years, and is supposed to have died long ago. Besides, he was a boy when he was lost, and it might be difficult to identify him, suppose any one should lay claim to the title. But it is such an unlikely thing that I need not tell the story; and indeed I think it better not to tell it. You will at any rate disappoint the man who supposed he was heir, the son of a nephew of mine, whom I have not seen for years, and who is an extravagant

worthless fellow. I think you had better look him up, and let him know of your existence, or he may dispute your identity when the time comes, and waste some of the estate in law business."

The Doctor was disappointed that Tom did not arrive with the party. Harold, in his letters to his father, was accustomed to mention himself and Tom always together, so that the Doctor had learnt to think of him as part of Harold. Miranda persuaded her grandfather that he could not be lost, and that some day he would surprise them by arriving there.

It may well be imagined that Miranda, glad though she was to see Rothescamp and her grandfather for the first time, was melancholy about our friend Tom Jones. It is questionable whether she felt his loss so much as her father—his tried comrade of eighteen years. A young girl's love is a pretty thing; but it fortunately does not, with innocent children, ripen too rapidly into passion. Hence, though Miranda and Tom Jones had fully understood each other, and though Miranda felt for a while that some-

thing had passed from her existence, she grew in time of serener temper, and could not help feeling pleasure in the beauty of Rothescamp scenery, and in the happiness which her father's return and her own gave to Doctor Septimus Tachbrook. The old gentleman, while he had borne his solitude well through all those years, consoling himself probably by the thought that he was doing a weighty work in the world, while his son was merely producing money and a daughter, could not well be otherwise than pleased with the daughter, though caring nothing about the money. For Miranda was both gentle and sprightly, both duteous and vivacious; and the old Doctor saw in her character a proof that the life of the Tachbrook race was not extinct.

CHAPTER XVII.

VOYAGERS AT HOME.

"How many a weary traveller, soiled with dust,
After long miles beneath a pitiless sun
On white monotonous roads, catches a glimpse
Of the remote blue ocean, all alive
With yachts and trawlers—a great war-ship spreading
Canvas like snow on masts like mighty trees,
And thinks, *Ah! surely on the sea is rest!*
Toil on the mainland, rest upon the main!"

A TRILLION is defined by Dr Johnson as "a million of millions of millions." A mathematician might more conveniently describe it as the number whose common logarithm is 18. It would be a remarkably pleasant amount to possess in sovereigns, if only there were gold enough in the world to coin it. The trillionaire might turn patriot, and pay the National Debt without feeling it, much to the relief of the over-burdened taxpayers. Fancy the sensation in the House if the

Right Honourable Robert Lowe could get up and announce that Sir Theophilus Trillion, Baronet, had sent him a cheque on Drummond's for what the French call a milliard; so that taxation would cease to be necessary for the present. Nobody would begrudge the generous trillionaire a peerage and a statue.

People who have lived much at sea find the land unpleasant in certain respects. It is noisy; it is infested by tramps, and tax-gatherers, and telegraph posts; it is monotonous in its fixity. Day after day you see the same place and go through the same routine. If one had the inexhaustible trillion, right pleasant would it be to launch a yacht that resembled a floating island. There might be gardens on deck, and groves of trees; and why not a Rotten Row for equestrian exercise? We do not, as yet, utilise the sea. Byron has made two false statements in a breath in one of his weakest, and therefore most admired, passages. He tells us that—

> "Man marks the earth with ruin; his control
> Stops with the shore."

To mark the earth with ruin can hardly be deemed a primary function of the race which builds cities and plants gardens, while it is quite certain that the sea has been controlled ever since Noah launched his ark on the maddened and tormented waters—ever since Jason led forth his band of wanderers. Still our control might be carried further. Build vaster ships—sail on great circles—calculate cyclones—then the sea may become a habitable country.

Miranda quite pined for the sea. She felt imprisoned at Rothescamp-in-the-Valley. She longed to wander over the interminable waste of ocean in search of Tom Jones, whom she felt certain she should meet again, notwithstanding his strange disappearance. Fain would she have persuaded her father to start in search of her lost lover, but it was not to be expected that he should desert the Doctor in his old age. So Miranda perforce remained at Rothescamp, and waited, with a firm belief, strengthened by her grandfather's superstition, that Tom would return in time.

Doctor Tachbrook had by this time wholly relinquished his practice—seldom, indeed,

went beyond the limits of the quaint old garden behind his house. It was his delight to wander there on fine afternoons, and to hear his son spin yarns interminable. He had lived all his long life at home; he liked to follow in imagination Harold's wild adventures in the world's remotest seas.

Harold, on the other hand, was eager to hear whether anything further was discoverable concerning Mary Fane. Edith's last thoughts rested on this girl; and though so many years had passed, Harold was loyal to his lost wife, and longed to find the school friend whom she loved so well.

"She is untraceable," said Doctor Septimus.

"I shall make another trial, for all that," quoth Harold; "I will find her, *if* she lives."

Meanwhile Gilbert Tachbrook, better known as the Troglodyte, made himself known to Messrs Sherwood and Sherwood, hereditary solicitors to the estate, who were almost the only people who knew anything about the present baronet, and their knowledge was limited. Though Rothescamp rumour placed him in a lunatic asylum, and though he was well quali-

fied for such a residence, he was actually at Venice. He lived under an assumed name in a palace on the Grand Canal, and was famed for lying in bed all day, and breakfasting at sunset. Though sumptuous in his habits, Sir Arthur lived within the income of the Rothescamp estates. Soon after Gilbert Tachbrook had called on Messrs Sherwood, he received a note from them with intelligence of Sir Arthur's death. He died intestate, and there was rather a large accumulation of personal property.

The old legal firm of Lincoln's Inn were quite willing to acknowledge Gilbert Tachbrook as the heir, but there arose an unexpected difficulty. One day an elderly lady in deep mourning called on Mr Sherwood, junior—junior by courtesy, for he was a man more staid and sagacious than his father—sending in a card as Mrs Tachbrook. Sherwood, junior, an attorney not easily surprised, was on this occasion slightly startled, for his visitor announced herself as daughter-in-law of the late Sir Arthur Tachbrook, and widow of his only son Harold.

"Sir Arthur Tachbrook died unmarried,"

said Sherwood, junior, with dignified solemnity, quite believing the mysterious lady an impostor.

"Sir Arthur did nothing of the kind," she replied, coolly. "He was married in Ireland. He had one son, to whom I was married at the church of Saint Edgar the King, in the city of London. And my only son is the present baronet and owner of the estates—Sir Harold Tachbrook."

Sherwood, junior, though startled, was not displeased. He saw chances of a lawsuit. The magic eighty pence, so easily multiplicable into thousands of pounds, affected his imagination. Could there be any truth in the story told by this lady in sable clothing? An Irish marriage—invalid, perhaps: infinite doubts loomed in the distance, suggested by the question of religion. Then where was the present claimant? and why had he sent his mother to represent him? These last questions Sherwood, junior, put in a quiet manner, but received from the lady this curt reply—

"Sir Harold Tachbrook, Baronet, of Rothescamp, will be here when requisite."

Sherwood, junior, could only reply—

"I shall be very glad to see him."

"You will kindly take from me the notice that he claims the title and estates. As solicitors to the family, your firm will not, of course, act with hostility to the real heir."

"Ah! but who is the real heir?"

"My son. Investigate the question. Your duty to the estate is to ascertain the truth."

"I admit this; but I should wish to consult my father and partner before deciding what steps to take. After that, I should be glad to see either yourself or your son. My father is out of town, but will return in a few days."

"I will call again this day week."

She passed out of the office in a stately fashion, leaving Sherwood, junior, slightly perplexed. He wrote to his father, who was staying in Devonshire; and the old gentleman was rather more puzzled than his son. Was it possible Sir Arthur married without a word to anybody? The old lawyer could not deny that possibility. He had known many mad clients, but none madder than Sir Arthur Tachbrook.

Sherwood, senior, came to town earlier than

he had intended, leaving reluctantly the river Dart for the river Thames. The matter was important. He and his son having held counsel together, sent for the Troglodyte, who was inhabiting a furnished cavern at the Clarendon. Before their client the two lawyers placed the case as clearly as they could. He listened and laughed.

"I think the story likely enough. We are a mad race. If this youngster is the right heir, in God's name let him have it. I remember that old Dr Tachbrook hinted at something of this sort, but he said that the young man entirely disappeared twenty years ago."

"The thing must be thoroughly proved," said Sherwood, junior. "There was something about that woman that struck me as not quite straightforward. At any rate, we must see her son first, and ascertain what he knows of his position."

"It is odd Sir Arthur, if he married, never mentioned it to me," said Sherwood, senior. "I was his friend as well as his lawyer, and he gave me confidential information of all his scrapes. That he should marry and have

a son, and take no steps to establish his son's legitimacy, seems almost incredible. Though a very careless man, he had strong opinions in regard to the rights and duties of hereditary landowners. He was proud of the Tachbrook blood and history."

"It is curious," said the Troglodyte. "However, all I desire is to get at the truth; if the old lady's story is true, the sooner it is established the better. I have no desire to occupy a position that is not mine."

The lawyers arranged that Gilbert Tachbrook should meet the lady in mourning when she next called. She came, to the day and hour. She brought with her a macilent man between thirty and forty, with lank black hair, a sallow complexion, short thin legs, feet and hands absurdly large. The hands were flat, unwashed, with bitten nails and diamond rings. This uninviting personage was introduced as Sir Harold Tachbrook. He looked rather uncomfortable, but put on an air of baronetcy, and tried to patronise everybody.

Mrs Tachbrook's story was clear enough. Sir Arthur was married at Athlone to a Miss

Geraldine, of the famous old family so called; date not precisely known, but easily obtainable; marriage at the famous Protestant church which was celebrated in rhyme by some wicked wit—

"High church,
Low steeple,
Dirty town,
Proud people."

Sir Arthur had one son by this lady, who was born abroad, and was named Harold. Lady Tachbrook died young; Sir Arthur turned misanthropic, and sent his son to England to be out of his way. He was put under the care of a Mrs Hartnoll, who kept a school at Greenwich. There he remained until he grew towards manhood, his father paying a hundred a year for his maintenance. There, at about eighteen, he fell in love, or fancied he fell in love, or perhaps was ordered to fall in love, with Priscilla Hartnoll, several years his senior, daughter of the Greenwich schoolmistress. That he married her against his will seemed clear to the lawyers from Priscilla's way of telling her story (for this, of course, was Priscilla, the

dignified female in black); the fact being that when he was seven or eight, and she seventeen or eighteen, she had been a hard taskmistress to him, teaching him spelling and grammar and geography, not without stripes, wherefore at eighteen he submitted to marry her without venturing to murmur. On his marriage Sir Arthur withdrew the hundred a year, and Priscilla began to fear she had made a mistake; but when he came of age his father sent him a cheque for fifteen thousand pounds, which he said was his mother's property, and thereafter took no further notice of him.

When he got this money he became mutinous, and rebelled against the lady who had married him. He was a weak member of a strong family. He was obstinate and spiteful; his wife, who thought she had done a clever thing, found only that she had made a great mistake. He treated her brutally. They had one boy, on whom he visited his dislike for his mother. He gradually grew worse and worse, and finally died of delirium tremens in a London hospital.

This is a brief summary of the story told

by Priscilla Tachbrook to Gilbert Tachbrook and Messrs Sherwood & Sherwood. It bore the stamp of truth. Many points she was enabled to establish by old letters which she had carefully preserved. When her story was finished, the Troglodyte was first to speak.

"I think, Mrs Tachbrook, that your case is too strong for me. All I want is that right should be done; and if your son is the head of our house, I shall rejoice to see him in his proper place."

"You speak like a gentleman," said Sherwood, senior; "and it is the right way in which family matters should be arranged; but we, for our own sakes as well as yours, must carefully investigate the records of marriage and birth. These investigations, Mrs Tachbrook, shall be made as quickly as possible; and we shall be glad if you will assist us in any points within your cognisance."

Sherwood, junior, had said nothing all this time; he had been thinking. He was not a rapid man, but he was adroit and safe. Something about Sir Harold Tachbrook (so called) jarred on his instinct. There had

been lots of fools among the Tachbrooks, —strong families produce fools; but this man looked vulgar, and old families do not produce vulgarity. So Sherwood, junior, with a look at his father, which that wary old gentleman understood, said to the claimant—

"Will you look in to-morrow, and have some luncheon with me? I should like to talk over matters quietly."

The invitation was accepted, and Priscilla and her son went away. The lady looked triumphant.

"So I may give up my chance of the title and estates," said Gilbert Tachbrook, laughingly. "Never mind, I'll console myself with your sherry and Prague biscuits. How is it lawyers always have such dry sherry?"

"They do a dry business," said Sherwood, senior. "But, Tom, my boy, what's your idea for having that greedy-looking fellow to lunch with you to-morrow? Baronet or not, I should not care to lunch with him."

"He makes me ashamed of the Tachbrooks," said Gilbert.

"I don't think he need," remarked Sherwood, junior, quietly.

"Why, he's a manifest cad."

"Yes; but not a manifest Tachbrook. There is something odd about the affair."

"The woman's story is straightforward," said Sherwood, senior.

"Yes; she tells a certain amount of truth, but I think it is mixed with lies. That Sir Arthur married Miss Geraldine, I believe, and that their son married—or, rather, was married by—this appalling woman. Poor devil! Fancy being forcibly married by the educational female who had walloped you in your childhood! Dreadful fate!"

"But what is your hypothesis?" asked Sherwood, senior.

"I am not sure that I have reached one. I have a kind of attenuated impression that this man is not a Tachbrook."

"He doesn't look like one," said Gilbert.

"No," replied Sherwood, junior. "So I want to find out two things. Did this woman have a son? Does anybody know this man? I will drop a line to Dr Tachbrook, and ask if he knows anything of this business. The first point we shall establish by the registers probably. As to the second

— well, I may know more after we have lunched together."

"Come and dine with me afterwards," said the Troglodyte. "I shall be glad of your news. There's some good claret in Bond Street."

"With pleasure."

Sherwood, junior, when he had attended to a little business, put himself into a hansom, and found his way to Scotland Yard. There he meet Inspector Ubique.

"Ubique," he said, "I want to find out who somebody is. I am going to give him some luncheon between one and two to-morrow at the Pall Mall. You could manage to pass through the room and take a look at him, couldn't you?"

"Easily. I'll see it's done, sir."

"Thanks. I'll come down for your report in the course of the afternoon."

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN INSPECTION.

"Homo trium literarum."

THE attorney-at-law cannot always pick his company; and Sherwood, junior, having gentlemanly proclivities, felt that, by inviting the *quasi* Sir Harold to lunch with him, he was doing more than ordinary legal service. But he did not believe in this man, and he did not want to see the great estate of Tachbrook fall into wrong hands. Hence he threw himself into the matter with energy unusual. He treated his guest with as much courtesy as he could command; but it was not without a shudder he sat at the same table with him, disgusted by his dirt and diamonds, and ob-

serving that the attentive waiters looked also disgusted. Luckily there were few persons in the room at this hour; and so it was chiefly the waiters' criticism that discomposed Mr Sherwood. He, however, consoled himself with a good glass of wine, which he administered freely to his companion, desiring to develop his loquacity. This had its effect. At first very shy, Sir Harold warmed into garrulity, and was soon telling Sherwood, junior, most amazing adventures which had happened to him in all parts of the world. The lawyer listened with avidity.

So did somebody else. They had only just finished an anchovy salad, and were enjoying the accompanying Montrachet, when a middle-aged clergyman took a seat at the nearest table. He had a companion, a retiring young lady, dressed with elegant simplicity, who looked like his daughter. The divine ordered a quiet refection, which he took leisurely, and without much interruption of talk. He was so seated that Sherwood, junior, could scarcely perceive him, while Sherwood's guest was almost face to face with him. But the said guest saw no-

thing, save "an old fogy of a parson," as probably he would have described him; certainly recognised not the keenest detective eyes that ever London saw.

And who was the parson's daughter? Well, Mr Inspector Ubique has an orphan niece, whom he, a bachelor, adopted years ago, and who has entered into the romance and mystery of his profession, and kept his diary of discovery. The worthy and astute inspector is not so keen of hearing as he was once; his niece's rather nice looking little ears often do shrewd service when there is anything difficult to find out. Moreover, there are delicate enigmas wherein lady adventurers are concerned—feminine creatures who dress fashionably and aim at a distinguished style. Such game has to be tracked in exclusive coverts—in places where it seems as surprising to mark it down as to find a cormorant close to the tree of knowledge. Miss Lucy Ubique, though an uncovenanted and unrecognised servant of the Government, had once or twice done signal service. She wore this day a very handsome gold watch, given her by a Countess, whom she had saved from

being the victim of a clever conspiracy. Her uncle is a man of remarkable capacity, yet he owes much of his good fortune and high repute to the acumen of his niece.

The apparent parson and his supposititious daughter ate their quiet cutlets with a pint of claret between them, while the assumed baronet and his legal entertainer went through a series of courses, and mixed their wines recklessly. Sir Harold talked recklessly. He described extravagant adventures in countries seldom traversed. He had shot lions, caught condors in figure-of-four traps, climbed Andes, been buried in earthquakes. That the fellow was romancing was clear to his auditors; but every now and then an accidental truth crept into his farrago of lies. Those scraps of truth betrayed him. It is an adage that liars should have long memories; it may further be said that a liar, to succeed in his vocation, should *never* tell truth.

The country parson's luncheon was over first; indeed, Sherwood, junior, had much difficulty in bringing his entertainment to any termination. The quasi-baronet did not tire of eating, drinking, and talking, and it was

with a feeling of great relief that the lawyer, late in the afternoon, got him into a cab, and saw the last of him. This done, he drove off to find his friend the inspector.

"I hardly knew you at first," said Sherwood; "you looked frightfully respectable. What do you thing of my man?"

"I know he's a scamp," said Ubique. "I did not at first recognise him, though there was something in his face familiar to me; but my niece gave me the office."

"Your niece looks a very charming girl," said Sherwood.

"She's very good, and she's wonderfully sharp. She's a regular actress, and can go into any sort of company as if she belonged to them. She twigged this fellow almost directly; but he used to have carrotty hair, and now it's as black as if he had dipt it in an inkbottle. But he has a queer twitch of the left eyelid if you notice him carefully; he had it fifteen years ago, and ink won't cure that."

"But who is he?" asked Sherwood, with perhaps more impatience than befits a lawyer.

"At that time he went by the name of

Moses Hyam. He was a clerk; robbed his master; got seven years. We lost sight of him altogether, and thought he was dead or turned honest — dead most likely. But a couple of years ago he turned up in London again, and made an honest livelihood as a writer of begging-letters. He writes a lovely hand—two or three lovely hands, I may say. Sometimes he is a distressed author; sometimes a widow with many small brats; sometimes a curate in a consumption; but his favourite part is being a young lady of high position, who has been ruined by a scoundrel, who induced her to run away with him, though he had a wife already living, and who dares not now return to her ancestral home. This dodge is almost infallible. We found him out in it, and stopped about a hundred letters with post-office orders in them; but he was too quick for us, and got out of the way. I have seen nothing of him since till to-day."

"He professes to be Sir Harold Tachbrook, Baronet, and heir to an immense property. A person who calls herself his mother has been at our office with a plausible story of

her having married the son of the late baronet, and maintains that this is her son by him. I fear her story is true to some extent; but I can't think that fellow can be a Tachbrook."

"I 've seen some rum baronets," said the inspector, sagaciously.

"Yes; and so have I. But all the Tachbrooks I know or have known, though often eccentric, have been gentlemen."

"It 's very odd the lady should call him her son if he isn't. Did she have a son at all?"

"That is a most important point," said Sherwood. "There are several questions we must look into, and I think you had better come and see me some time to-morrow, when I may ask you for more help. I must be off now to dine with Gilbert Tachbrook, whom I believe to be the true baronet."

"You *know* he 's a Tachbrook, then?"

"No mistaking him. He looks like a family portrait stepped out of its frame. Ask your niece to accept this trifle to buy her a locket or a bracelet. Some day or other I should like you to bring her to Richmond or

Hampton Court. I have a great fancy to hear some of the stories I am sure she could tell."

Sherwood, junior, drove rapidly back to his own rooms for hasty ablution, and was only just in time for the Troglodyte's dinner.

"I have made so copious a lunch with our baronet," said the lawyer, "that I hope you are going to give me the very simplest of dinners."

"I am," said the dweller in a cave. "Oysters, with chablis; clear turtle, with old Madeira; a haunch of Exmoor mutton, with Heidseck; a grouse, with Lafitte. That's all you'll get."

"I feel already starved," said the attorney; "you will find in your bill of costs by and by—

	s.	*d.*
To attending you at dinner at the Clarendon,	13	4
To cab hire, ...	17	6
To headache next morning, . . .	6	8"

"All right!" said the Troglodyte, "I'll pay: a humorous lawyer is worth his hire. Come, let us try the oysters."

Gilbert Tachbrook, having lived so long on an island in solitude, had acquired two most

enviable faculties. He could live without gossip; he could live without anxiety—he was self-contained. It was an apophthegm of his that nothing which can happen to-morrow is worth a wise man's consideration to-day. As to the Tachbrook title and estates, he cared nothing so far as his own interests were concerned. When, by and by, Sherwood, junior, told him all he had discovered concerning the claimant, the Troglodyte's only feeling of disgust was that possibly this swindler might by ill-hap be a Tachbrook. His chance of the estate gave him no greater concern than the price of the wine he was drinking.

When they came to a tranquil cigar, with the mocha, Gilbert Tachbrook said—

"I shall leave this matter entirely to you, Mr Sherwood. My sole wish is that the rightful heir should obtain the estate; but I certainly shall regret to find the rightful heir a swindler and a felon. I hope better things. However, I am in your hands, and I give you full authority to act for me."

"I will try to do you full justice," said Sherwood. "I cannot believe this man has

any connection with your family. I shall make inquiries at once into Mrs Tachbrook's history."

"Do what you like. Don't trouble me more than is necessary. I am going to the Channel Islands to-morrow, and will give you an address."

"The Channel Islands!"

"Yes; Sark. You may have heard that, though I am an ancient mariner, I have a couple of young children to look after. My good cousin, Doctor Tachbrook, wanted the young heathens to come to his place; but I wouldn't have him bothered in his old age, so they have been at a boarding-house on Wimbledon Common. But, in answer to an advertisement, I have heard of a Miss Delisle, at Sark, a wonderfully ingenious person, whose mission it is to civilise small pagans."

"At so much a-year?" said Sherwood.

"Of course. The labourer is worthy of her hire. Now these two children, who are called Adam and Eve, have lived in the water from infancy. They know nothing except what they have found out for themselves. They are amphibious. They have lived un-

clothed till we entered the realms of decorum. They are a couple of superb little animals, and I quite shudder at the notion of educating them. Still, it must be done. Little Adam, you know, may be Sir Adam Tachbrook, if the other fellow turn out a failure."

"I shall be greatly interested in the future development of these children; but what cause have you for sending them to this person at Sark? What do you know about her?"

"I have made full inquiries. She is a lady of about forty, of good family and means, with a special faculty for educating children who have been warped or neglected. There is some romance of disappointment about her early life which has caused her to find for herself an unusual occupation. She seems, from all I hear, to have amazing powers of insight and of control. There are children who are thought stupid, because the exact things they could do well are never given them to do. This is one sort of problem she solves. There are also children who become little rebels for want of sensible treatment: they are either coaxed too much or castigated

too much. She has discovered the *via media*."

"She must be a remarkable woman," quoth Sherwood.

"So I think. I am going to take these youngsters over from Southampton to-morrow night, with special intent to see her. And, as I know one can get comfortable quarters in that picturesque islet, I shall probably stay there awhile. So, if you have anything important to say, write to Sark; if not, don't."

"Good!" said the lawyer, taking his final glass of cool claret. "But don't fall in love with this eccentric schoolmistress."

CHAPTER XIX.

AN INSULAR ENCHANTRESS.

"Circae pocula nosti."

ALLEGORY doubtless lies beneath all that Homer tells us, but it is allegory based on actual events. All fiction is based on history, as all language on onomatopoiea. There will never be any adequate explanation of the primeval mythus, yet it is full of suggestion and of moral, and cannot be studied without ample reward. Even to read it backwards is useful now and then. Miss Delisle had read backwards the story of Circe.

Her own early history was not a happy one. Left an orphan when quite young, she had been taken under the care of a maiden

aunt, who had a fierce temper and a stingy temperament. It was her mother's sister. Both sisters had been in love with Miss Delisle's father, and the lady who lost him never forgave either of them. Delisle himself was penniless; the sisters were co-heiresses to considerable property, but so settled that whichever survived, the other should take the whole, without any provision for children. Hence the orphan girl was wholly dependent on her aunt, who revenged upon her what she considered the misdeeds of her parents. The poor little animal was half starved, made to do menial work, punished for sheer love of cruelty, taught nothing at all. But in time people talked about her treatment, and the rector of the parish heard of it, and gave her persecutor a good lecture. As the aunt was a lady of exemplary piety, she did not venture to rebel against her clergyman's authority. So at about sixteen the girl was sent to a boarding school—of course, a cheap one. When she had been there a year or two, and had learnt all that the mistress could teach, her aunt made an arrangement by which she was to

become an articled pupil, which in schools of a low order means a person obliged to do work which servants will not deign to do. Even in private families of no culture, tutors and governesses are to this day disgracefully used. Think of the famous Justice Maule, one of the few men who have been both Senior Wrangler and First Smith's Prizeman, as tutor in a highly respectable family, where the smallest child slept in his bed, and had to be washed and dressed by him in the morning! Now that all the world is on the strike, why do not tutors and governesses begin?

Margaret Delisle got no holidays; saw and heard nothing of her only relation; received no letters, except now and then a kind note from the old rector. It was a hard life, but it did not harden her; it made her, indeed, an intelligently sympathetic woman. The mistress of the school did a very peculiar business. You might see in the morning papers, at Christmas and Midsummer, an advertisement, not in the best English, to the effect that she received, on moderate inclusive terms, unmanageable children, or children

whom it was desirable to send from home. No holidays unless wished for. This resulted in her getting a large number of neglected little creatures, some of whom were illegitimate, some too much in the way of dissipated fathers or jealous stepmothers. Mrs Runcom (she was a widow, and had worried her husband into another world) asked no questions, but always insisted on her money in advance. Her system was a simple one; she regarded all her pupils as "unmanageable," and began by what she called "breaking their spirits." This process was accomplished by a small allowance of food and a great many sharp blows. A week of such treatment usually produced a perfect cure.

Margaret Delisle had been sent to this school by her amiable aunt, with a cheque for a year's education, and a note saying that she was a very troublesome girl, who might have lived comfortably at home, but who made mischief, by complaining to the clergyman of the parish that she was badly treated. As a year's payment in advance was four times what she ventured to ask, Mrs Runcom saw at once that Aunt Rebecca

was a most respectable lady, and her honest indignation was aroused at Margaret's wickedness. It was just a case for her cure. The girl had travelled a good many miles outside a coach on a frosty day, but no pity on her had this harridan. A servant, having removed her bonnet and shawl, showed her into the schoolmistress's private room, where that lady was sitting by a comfortable fire, with fragrant tea and an oily pile of muffins beside her. The sight looked pleasant to the shivering starving child. Mrs Runcom said—

"You are Margaret Delisle?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Always kertchey when you speak to me. I have a letter here from your good aunt. You have behaved most wickedly to her. I wonder you are not ashamed of yourself."

Margaret said nothing, feeling almost faint with trouble and exhaustion.

Mrs Runcom went on—

"You will soon be taught obedience here. I know how to break rebellious spirits." Then ringing the bell, she said to the gaunt servant who entered, "Take this girl to bed. You know where she is to sleep."

Margaret unresistingly followed the servant to a long dormitory, in which were about twenty comfortless beds. It was about six on a January evening, and she was almost too cold to undress. Of course all the other beds were as yet unoccupied. The servant hurried her, for her own tea was cooling in the kitchen.

"Come, make haste, you little slut; I can't be here all night."

Wherewith she pulled away at Margaret's scanty habiliments with a rough hand. When the girl wanted, cold and tired as she was, to kneel and say her prayers, the servant said—

"Pooh, pooh! say 'em in bed."

She bundled her in, gave her a smart slap on the shoulders, and left her in darkness. But Margaret had strength enough to get out of bed again and sob an incoherent prayer upon her knees.

Thus began her career under Mrs Runcom, and it went on in the same way. This ill-conditioned woman was always hardest on her last victim. Margaret, however, disgusted her, and tired her out. She liked

children who resisted, rebelled, screamed: she liked to break their spirits. Margaret showed no spirit to break. The fact is, that the good rector, who, all in the kindness of his heart, had transferred her from the frying-pan to the fire, was very apt to take his texts from the Sermon on the Mount. Its wonderful lessons of fortitude and non-resistance he inculcated with gentle but persuasive eloquence. Indeed, he practised them, which is harder far than preaching them. He had a man-servant who robbed him for years, and was at last found out.

"Thomas," said the rector, "I am sorry you should have taken the corn from my cob; doubtless necessity pressed you. Here is a sovereign for your immediate wants; I will increase your wages two shillings a week, which is all I can afford."

Will it be believed that Thomas refused both the sovereign and the increased wages, and seldom stole again? *Never* I must not say, for petty theft had become an inveterate habit with the poor fellow. At last, being a Kentishman, and therefore imaginative, he

cured himself—or nearly—by this plan. He fixed up a money box in the stable, and when he had filched corn or hay during the week, he put the price he got for it into the box. At the end of a year he brought it to his master, and told him all about it.

"Thomas," said the parson, "you have done wisely. I shall put this in the Savings' Bank for you. Go on in the same way. There will be less money next year, I am sure."

To return to poor Margaret Delisle. Her perfect submission, her absolute obedience to any order however humiliating, to any punishment however painful, caused Mrs Runcom to despise her rather, and in time to leave her alone. So Margaret, naturally quick, learned what there was to learn in that sordid seminary, and obtained much influence over her schoolmates, and made herself very useful to her mistress, who was lazy in most things, and only active in cruelty. Margaret became quite a pet, and was thereby enabled to mitigate the sufferings of others. When, at the age of eighteen, Aunt Rebecca proposed that a premium should be paid to make her an articled pupil for three years,

after which she would have no more responsibility, the schoolmistress was well pleased; she took care, however, to assure poor Margaret that she would taste the cane all the same if she were troublesome.

Now Miss Delisle, who had grown up under all these difficulties tall and handsome, with dark eyes and hair, might easily have defied the schoolmistress. But she still held to the Sermon preached upon the hill of grey olive-trees, and she began to think she had found a mission in life—to tame down Mrs Runcom, and to lessen the troubles of her victims. She set herself to this heart and soul. If she were ordered to punish a poor little child, she would let it off with the mildest of pats, and then, perhaps, the schoolmistress would strike her, and she always submitted without complaint. Many a time has she lost her dinner, because she had, against orders, supplied some child with food.

Yet had she spirit, as one event will show. One day, Mrs Runcom, who more and more consulted her, showed her a letter from a London tradesman who wished her to receive

his daughter, aged about seventeen. The poor man's case was bad enough. His wife had taken to drinking, and had killed herself with it: worse, she had infected her daughter, who could not resist it. Somebody had recommended Mrs Runcom, and he offered an unusually large sum if she would try the girl. He described her as quiet and docile naturally, but excited by the slightest taste of alcohol.

A difficult case; but Mrs Runcom could not resist the money. The girl came, brought by her father, a gentlemanly tradesman in a large way of business. He manufactured the most amazing portmanteaus in the world, or something of that sort. The girl was tall, with a kind of florid handsomeness, and as quiet as a lamb. The father paid his money, had a cup of tea, and went away melancholy but much impressed by Mrs Runcom's distinguished manner. Miss Delisle was not present.

Now the worthy schoolmistress had a habit of occasionally improving the flavour of her tea with a drop of bright cognac; and now, unthoughtful of her new pupil's weakness, she

went to a corner cupboard with glass front, took from it a small decanter, and was just making the mixture, when the girl rushed wildly at her and snatched it out of her hand. There was a struggle between them, and all the brandy was spilt except a small drop that Mary Booth had managed to gulp—small, but enough to madden her. Mrs Runcom, however, was too strong for her ; her sheer weight threw the girl on the floor and kept her there, and the noise brought in a couple of servants, who soon mastered her. Then, with her arms pinioned, she was marched off to bed, and strong means were taken to break her spirit. Her spirit suffered little ; her body, however, suffered so much that she could not come to the schoolroom for some days.

When she came she was quiet enough ; but Margaret, a close observer, noticed a curiously cunning look in her eye. The schoolmistress, of course, worried her terribly ; found fault with her at every turn, persecuted her miserably for weeks. The girl seemed to grow dull and torpid under this treatment, but people with a craze, however caused, are difficult to understand. One day, as Mrs

Runcom entered the schoolroom, she noticed that her pupil was missing.

"Where's Mary Booth?" she exclaimed. "Margaret, you are very careless; you shall be punished for not looking after that girl."

At this moment Mary Booth entered the door. She had slunk into the mistress's room. In one hand she held a decanter of brandy, in the other one of those slates with wooden frames on which unfortunate children do impossible sums.

"Here's Mary Booth!" she said. "Do you want me, you old wretch?"

And in an instant she struck Mrs Runcom on the head with the flat of the slate, so that it broke in many pieces, and the frame was round her neck; and then both the schoolmistress and her assailant fell on the floor.

The former was ill for weeks, being so suddenly stunned. During that time Margaret was mistress, and everybody was glad. She had spirit enough to curb rebellious children, but she would not torture children who were not rebellious. When I was young there was a schoolmaster who advertised that he kept

order by *moral suasion*, which the boys decided must be Greek for a birch-rod.

Amazingly did Margaret manage affairs, though only twenty. She had a heavy responsibility. Mrs Runcom was dangerously ill; brandy in tea, with many muffins, is not the healthiest of diets. Mary Booth was troublesome for several days; but Margaret took advantage of her lucid intervals, and tried to tame her. She reasoned with her on the folly of maddening herself with drink; she showed her that Mrs Runcom would probably treat her with terrible severity if she did not reform; she depicted her father's trouble; she tried to describe to her that she might be enjoying life as mistress of her father's house. These arguments, with Margaret's natural magnetism, had their weight. One day the girl voluntarily promised that she would never touch anything intoxicating again without Miss Delisle's leave.

Mrs Runcom took some time to come round. When she did, she was languid—too languid to carry out the vengeance which she had vowed against Mary Booth. Indeed, Margaret would have permitted nothing of

the kind. She was now mistress of the situation; she ruled her little realm very easily. She received, during Mrs Runcom's illness, one or two new pupils, and treated them very differently from the way in which she had been treated. Her own experience had taught her that children with harsh relations are most of all God's creatures to be pitied. She pitied and consoled and advised, where her unwiser mistress was wont to scold and starve and flog.

On Margaret's twenty-first birthday she terminated her engagement. On the morning of that day, by a curious coincidence, came a letter from the rector, informing her of her Aunt Rebecca's death, and that she had left all her property to the Society for Preventing the Drowning of Kittens; but he added that, as it was property in land, the statute of mortmain made the bequest void, and she inherited the whole.

This letter she read at breakfast, and was unable to munch her thick bread-and-butter for the excitement of it. Just then a servant came to say Mrs Runcom wished to speak to her; she obeyed the summons. The

schoolmistress, half in her old fashion, and half in her new, said—

"This is your last day with me, I think, Margaret."

"Yes, ma'am," says she, with a "kertchey."

"You are laughing at me," said the old lady, fiercely. "Don't be impudent. You shall be well whipped, though it *is* your last day, if you dare be saucy to me."

"I am willing to submit to any punishment you consider I deserve, madam," said Margaret.

"Yes, that's it. You always did submit, and so you come to command." And then she began to cry. Cruelty and cognac, muddle and muffins, had brought her to her dotage.

When she became more intelligent, Margaret asked her, would she like to retire, and said she would take the school herself, and give her as much for the rest of her life as the present rate of profit? The old lady, when Miss Delisle explained to her how she could do this, was delighted beyond measure, and the arrangement was very soon made. But, thanks to muffins, the annuity soon fell in.

Margaret had no intention of carrying on the school for any length of time. She only wished to send the pupils back to their parents in a reasonable and reconcileable frame of mind. She had ascertained the histories of them all, had probed their mental bounds, had taught them the unwisdom of rebellion. Most of her disciples—all but one indeed—were, at the end of the half year, restored to their homes in a satisfactory way.

The one exception was Mary Booth!

She declared it would kill her to leave her dear mistress. She would be her servant—her slave. If she had to go away, she should go mad again; she *must* live with her. Much wild language, which resulted in a talk to Booth, pater, who was just then thinking of a second marriage to a warm widow; and had also on his mind a new patent portmanteau, with pockets for your own cigars, and your wife's maraschino, and a pistol in the lock to shoot any railway porter who should try to get at either. He offered Margaret a hundred a year to take care of Mary till she was tired of her; and Margaret said—

"I will take your daughter and your money

for a time. When she is of age we will reconsider the question."

Quite proud was Margaret that she was of age. Mary was only in her nineteenth year, she thought; a mere chit, a baby. Certes Margaret was twenty rather than two years wiser.

Miss Delisle got her property with perfect ease. She stayed awhile with the dear old rector, and induced him to accept a thousand pounds, the interest whereof should be paid for preaching on the Sermon on the Mount, every Whitsunday afternoon. Then, with Mary Booth as a companion, she travelled a few years, having always been athirst for knowledge of other lands, and at no time dreaming of such knowledge as possible. After being far a-field, for they reached the mount where her beloved sermon was preached, they returned to travel through England, missing no minster town. England's outlying islands also they saw; and when Margaret beheld the mad wave boiling in the Creux Terrible, in Sark, she turned to Mary and said,

"I shall come and live here, and set up a school; and you shall help me."

Mary would have thrown herself into the Creux Terrible if Miss Delisle had bidden her.

Now it was to arrange for Adam and Eve with Miss Delisle that the Troglodyte had come to Sark; and the first thought that passed through his mind, as he looked at her glossy dark hair and pleasant brown eyes was this—

"I'll be hanged if she's forty."

CHAPTER XX.

ADAM AND EVE AT SARK.

"To his side the fallow deer
Came and rested without fear;
The eagle, lord of land and sea,
Stooped down, to pay him fealty;
And both the undying fish that swim,
Through Bowscale Farn did wait on him.

GILBERT TACHBROOK picked up his two wild youngsters at Wimbledon, and carried them off to Southampton by rail. He found them as wild as ever, for they could not understand the usages of civilisation. They had lived in a way which developed their instincts while leaving their reason dormant. This is the simplest form of life. In the antique poetry of any people are found men of heroic mould who scarcely reasoned at all, but who pos-

sessed in a very high degree the spiritual and natural instincts. They saw the Divinity in many forms around them; they knew the meaning of the sounds uttered by wind and wave, of the flight of birds through the air. They were superstitious, in the nobler sense. This very rational generation laughs at all things superstitious, and has adopted a creed called Positivism (being uniquely negative), which is only explicable on the assumption that the world is a vast machine that has no motive power and no owner. Many difficulties arise in connection with this theory, but they are quietly ignored.

Now little Adam and Eve both believed in a God; had an actual personal belief in Him; fancied even that they had heard His voice and felt His touch. Had they not seen Him afar, when the mighty sun fell westward from the Island of Hawks, attended by a terribly beautiful train of angelic powers? Again, Adam and Eve were on good friends with all living creatures. Birds would perch on their pretty sunburnt shoulders, fish would come through the water to be stroked by their hands. The very butterflies and

dragonflies recognised them; they handled bees and wasps and hornets without fear. Yet had their faculty of reason been most imperfectly developed, and they could not understand the mighty motive powers which actuate the majority of their fellow-creatures.

It must be admitted they were fit pupils for Miss Delisle.

The Troglodyte started at midnight from Southampton Water, and was off Guernsey Pier at about five on a lovely quiet morning. That troublesome Race of Alderney had not delayed them. He stayed for the slightest possible refreshment, chartered a cutter, and reached Sark in excellent good time for a breakfast of hot lobster at Madame Vaudin's. Then he went with his youngsters to find Miss Delisle's residence, which he ascertained was on the coast above the Chapelle des Mauves.

Fancy how Adam and Eve, imprisoned awhile at Wimbledon, rejoiced in the infinite space and variety of the never-resting sea! How they longed to throw away their unaccustomed wearisome wrappages, and dash headlong into the green island water—to dive

below and see the upper world through a ceiling of emeralds! They danced along Sark's green terraces with more gaiety of heart than they had felt since they left their cavernous island.

Gilbert Tachbrook found Miss Delisle's house to be an old granite farmhouse, not unlike that Jersey farmhouse delineated in Mr Bertrand Payne's monogram on the genealogy of the Millais family. Quaint was it, long, low, rambling, irregular, buried in a great garden with a double avenue of limes and chestnuts on one side, and on the other a sunny wall covered with chaumontelle pear-trees. Surely the chaumontelle in its perfection is the king of all fruits. Very green was the turf on Miss Delisle's lawns, and her trees, both fruit and forest, flourished so as to show they were carefully tended.

When the Troglodyte reached the house, he was shown by a neat servant girl into a wainscoted parlour, with a deep red paper above the wainscot. The lozenged windows were in bars, with low seats around, where you could lounge and see the shadow creep around the sun-dial, while the birds ate the

cherries. Gilbert Tachbrook had not long waited before there entered a good-looking young lady, of ruddy complexion and pleasant manner, who informed him that Miss Delisle was down on the beach, but would return shortly. This was no other than Mary Booth, whom Margaret Delisle had tamed, and who was now her absolute slave. Miss Booth proposed to take the young people out to see the grounds. They went with her: and in less than two minutes entered Margaret Delisle. We have heard already his internal ejaculation—"I'll be hanged if she's forty." That, indeed, was her scholastic age—an educational brevet rank. It is doubtful whether she was above twenty-eight. The Troglodyte, undoubted member of a family famous for beauty and amorous of beauty, recognised in this lady a rare and superb type of womanhood. Sherwood, junior's humorous warning suddenly recurred to him.

Previous correspondence with Miss Delisle had cleared the way as to negotiation, and the conversation between her and Gilbert Tachbrook resulted in a brief exchange of

histories. Each was amused with the other's apparently unique adventures.

"I should have thought," said the Troglodyte, "that you had enough of unruly children with that abominable old woman, and that now you would prefer some other occupation."

"O no," she said, laughing. "I have become quite enamoured of managing the unmanageable. My motto is *suaviter in modo, fortiter in re.* Miss Booth, whom you saw just now, and who took charge of the children, was the fiercest rebel I ever tamed; now she is as obedient to me as if she had eaten haschish, and as firm in government as the Caliph Haroun."

"You have a magic influence," said the Troglodyte, "and belong to a famous fraternity who have influenced the world more than men deem. In your case there is freedom from the quackery which entered into the characters of Paracelsus, Swedenborg, Cagliostro, Mesmer."

"Thank you," she said; "that charming compliment deserves a glass of wine, and all this time I have been neglecting hospitality."

Thus saying, she found in a corner cupboard of black oak a decanter and glasses, that looked as old as the oak itself, being of Bohemian ware, thin as a soap bubble, and tinged with a flush of colour like a cleft pomegranate. The wine was of much the same colour. The Troglodyte approved it.

"Have you many eccentric pupils just now?" he asked.

"Only four—two girls and two boys—all pretty near the age of your children. You see, I do the work for sheer love of it. I can choose my subjects. Two of my present set are twins, a brother and sister, whose peculiarity is that one cannot live a minute without the other. They are motherless, and their father is in India. They seem always absorbed in each other. They care for nobody else. Now, as there are obvious objections to a brother and sister being linked together for life, I am doing my best to separate them."

"Shall you succeed?"

"I think. Your two young people will wonderfully help me, by introducing a new element of interest. When your Adam and

Eve rush wildly into the sea, perhaps these timid twins will have a desire to follow them."

"And what are your other two?"

"One is a boy of about seven, who came into the world biting and kicking, and has bitten and kicked everybody ever since. They say he was born with teeth, like Richard III."

"I wonder you tried so troublesome a customer," said the Troglodyte. "Your amiable old mistress would better have suited him."

"O I don't know. My sixth pupil is a young lady now about sixteen, a member of a rather large family. She is a curious example of the way in which ancestral peculiarities reappear. Her great-grandfather was a Devonshire gentleman of great physical and mental power — famous as a wrestler, a duellist, a parliamentary speaker. Her grandfather was smaller every way, in body and mind. Her father was smaller still; and though, as is often the way, he married a lady of vast proportions, out of a family of thirteen there was but one of any

size—my pupil. She was the sixth, I think. At ten years old she was mistress of all her brothers and sisters: her father was afraid of her, and her mother too lazy to interfere—indeed, I think she rather sympathised with the young giantess. However, in time she became intolerable, and so was consigned to me."

"How did they get her here?"

"She came quite cheerfully: she longed for more worlds to conquer. Having reduced her family to a state of abject submission, she thought it would be great fun to subjugate a schoolmistress. She had treated her elder brothers and sisters as footmen and waiting-maids. They dared not refuse her, or it would have been a case of *haec frangit ferulas, rubet ille flagellis*. Had their mental exceeded their corporal vigour, they would have combined against her; but she is as clever as she is strong, and was altogether too much for them."

"A difficult subject," said Tachbrook. "How in the world could you manage her?"

"I took her very coolly, being previously informed as to her peculiarities. She came

into the room laughing, attended by a lady's-maid, and said—

"'Now here I am, Miss Delisle—what do you think of me?'

"'I think you have not learnt to behave like a lady,' I replied. 'You are old enough to be rather wiser. Tell me this: have you come here of your own accord?'

"'O quite.'

"'You know that you are sent here to be cured of your tendency to bully other people?'

"'I know it well—cure me if you can.'

"'I will cure you: no fear.' Then I just touched this silver handbell, and a couple of servants came in who were quite capable of mastering the young lady. They took her off to bed in a room which happens well to suit my refractory patients, since it is lighted by a skylight only. Not till the next morning did I visit her, and then I tried to make her see that she was making an immense mistake in life.

"'You are strong and clever,' I said; "but there are people stronger and cleverer than you. I admire your power; but power

ought never to become tyranny. Now, will you let me guide you?—or am I to continue to use force? If you like to live here quietly, and try to get rid of your unwise tendency to govern other people, I think you will soon be a girl of the best sort. If you will not, I shall treat you severely. I can be severe, I assure you.'

"She looked at me as if she would like to fly at my throat, like a wild cat. I laughed at her. 'Come,' I said, 'make up your mind to submit, since you *must* submit. I will give you somebody to keep in order.'

"This notion affected her. 'Whom?' said she.

"'A little boy. He scratches and kicks and bites. He is rather less than half your age. Do you think you can manage him?'

"'*Manage him!* I should think so. Let me try.'

"'You shall try on condition that you obey me in everything I order. I can enforce obedience, as you see. If you are rebellious, you will be in trouble; if you keep order, you may be as happy as you please. I can see you are a clever girl, and I don't

see why you should not be a good one. Tame this wild boy, and you will tame yourself.'"

"Excellent!" said the Troglodyte. "What has been the result?"

"The result has been exactly what I expected. The girl and the boy—both fools in the same fashion—have acted and re-acted on each other. Both, in different ways, were under the impulse of physical force. I left Susanna and Dick—those are their elegant names—to fight it out between them. The consequence is, that Dick is very tame, and that Susanna, having found the difficulty of managing anybody else, begins to think she will try to manage herself."

"You will have a curious menagerie when my two youngsters are added to these. How are the twins named?"

"Frederick and Ellen; their surname is unimportant. They are a queer couple. Fred might have been Ellen, or Ellen, Fred. You can see that Fred will never be manly, or Ellen womanly. The sister is far more troublesome than the brother, and I sometimes am obliged to use stern measures with

her. She is too forward for a girl, and he is too backward for a boy."

"Your menagerie will now be quite interesting," said the Troglodyte. "Let me see:—Susanna, the Despot; Dick, the Rebel; Fred, the Girl; Ellen, the Boy; Adam, the Preadamite; Eve, the Primeval. A charming little colony. Do you think this last importation will improve it?"

"Certainly. Your two children, from your description, are true children of nature, whose faults are those of absolute simplicity. The other four are mere artificial animals. I speak freely to you, Mr Tachbrook, for I see you will not misinterpret what I say. The interchange of sexual intellect between Ellen and Fred is evidently morbid. Boy and girl are both fools; and I am rather doubtful whether they have intellect enough to recover themselves. Your little folk—whom, by the way, I have not yet seen—will help to make them healthier. Shall we go and look for them? I suspect Mary has taken them down to the sands by the Chapelle de Mauves."

Miss Delisle took her guest down one of those zigzag precipitous paths which are

common on the shore of our Norman islets—those islets which remain as gage and pledge that the Queen of England is Duchess of Normandy, and that in days to come Normandy will again be English. Those slant stairs, from summit of cliff to floor of sand, required quick eye and steadfast tread; but they were child's-play to the Troglodyte, who had acquired that use of the foot which enabled Waterton to climb a tree at seventy. If the Creator had designed the foot to be encased in leather, He would have made it toeless. It was meant to do equal work with the hand. Adam and Eve, children of nature, could grasp a branch with the foot, and hang on thereby.

Down through a narrow many-angled steepness of descent, buried in famous ferns and humid with a trickling streamlet, they reached the wide stretch of sand around the chapel of the seamews. Is there any man who knows the true legend of that mysterious chapel? What the Troglodyte heard from Miss Delisle was curious. The Chapelle de Mauves is a freak of nature, like the cavern of Wayland Smith. It stands in soli-

tary beauty on the sands of Sark. It is a granite gem. Always you may see the sea-mews circling around it, and perching on its pointed ridge of roof, screaming a strange bird-litany, which none but Aristophanes could transmute into the weaker form of words. And the story which Margaret Delisle, having learnt it from the Norman indwellers, told unto Gilbert Tachbrook was, that the famous Saint Magloire, who brought to these islands of La Manche the imperishable religion of Christ, was greatly interrupted when he brought the good tidings to the Sark folk by the scream of innumerable seamews; for neither on Great Sark nor on Little Sark (unless you creep into a cavern) is there any spot whence you cannot see the sea. So the great Magloire was interrupted by the congregation of shrieking sea gulls, and declared in language to the pagans of Sark unintelligible that the island was *φυλακὴ παντὸς ὀρνέου ἀκαθάρτου καὶ μεμισημένου*. And thus in his ire he perorated—

"Birds! the sea shall to-morrow build you a chapel of your own."

And the next day there was a great storm,

and granite cliffs were torn away by the sea's anger, and the chapel of the seamews stood upon the sands, a myriad of birds hovering around it and screaming a strange *kyrie eleison.*

As they stood beside the chapel, with lovely lines of sunset light across the yellow sands, they perceived Mary Booth in the distance alone. Approaching her, they found that she was in the position of that immemorial hen who is always calling to her ducklings from the verge of a pond. No sooner did Adam and Eve find themselves by the sea than they stripped off their clothing, always to them a hateful wrappage, and threw themselves into the water with irresistible instinct. Poor Mary Booth screamed after them, but it was useless; all she could do was pace up and down like a sentinel, doubtless vowing to scarify them on their return.

Much did the Troglodyte laugh when he beheld Miss Booth in distress, and the two children a mile away in the offing.

"You see their habits," he said to Miss Delisle. "Can you tame them?"

It strikes me that she just then looked as if she would like to tame the Troglodyte himself. He, for his part, gave a mighty shout—his customary summons home at the Island of Hawks—and the children swam ashore.

END OF VOL. I.

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